

STUDIES IN OLD TESTAMENT CHARACTERS

BY

WILBERT WEBSTER WHITE, PH. D.

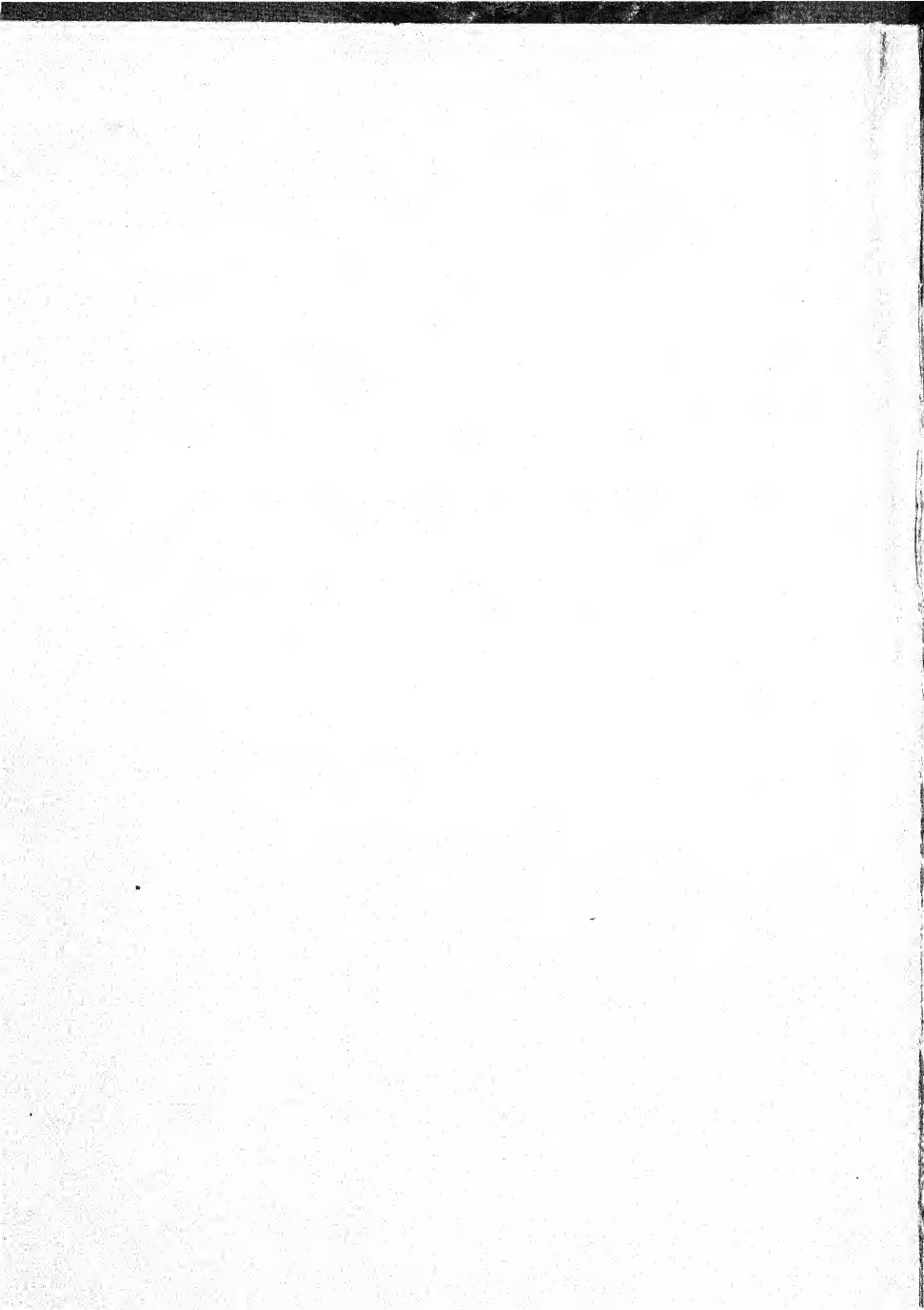
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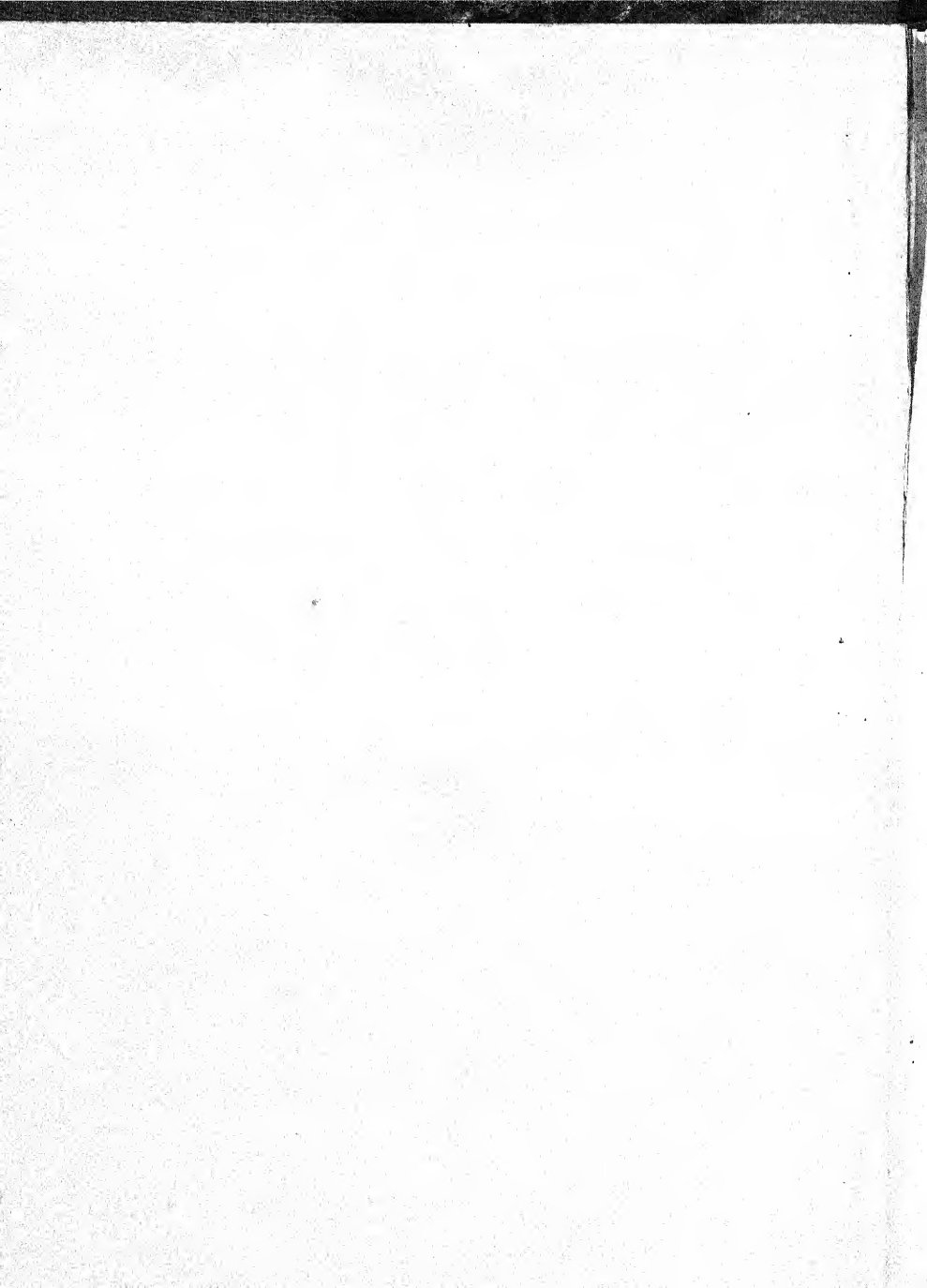
OLD TESTAMENT
RECORDS, POEMS AND ADDRESSES

BY

WILBERT WEBSTER WHITE, PH. D.

NEW YORK
THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE
OF YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN
ASSOCIATIONS





Studies in Old Testament Characters

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Studies in Old Testament Characters

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Studies in Old Testament Characters

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

Read over these suggestions at the beginning of each week.

Scripture supplies no shortcuts for the intellect. Expect to apply the mind with as much vigor in this study as in any other.

Follow the order of the day's work. Do not first read over the directions. Do not read even the second part of the first direction before doing the first part.

Do exactly as directed. If the direction is: *Glance* over the section, do not *read* it.

Work with regularity. Do the work of each day in its day.

Employ a portion of the best of the day. Let it be if possible the first part of the day.

Study the material itself. Do not let the mind wander.

Hurry never, but do not waste time. Be expeditious.

Be always thoughtful.

Be always applying to your life when there is material applicable. Do not force applications.

Do not strain the material for thought. Let it yield what is there and be content.

Do not be sidetracked. Keep to the work in hand. Note additional lines of thought and investigation which suggest themselves, but work them out at another time.

Develop the historical imagination, but be careful that it be true to history.

Be on your guard against estimating the characters of ancient times by present day standards. Take sufficiently into account the political, religious and social conditions of the times.

Record thoughts, impressions, questions and difficulties. Do not insist that all questions be answered and all difficulties be removed at once. Study and wait.

Use the maps and diagrams freely.

Do not pass by marginal references and footnotes.

Be on special guard not to derive answers to questions propounded in the Studies from some other source than the text. As a rule answers will be found in the text.

Be patient and persistent. Results will come if you work and wait.

Emphasize prayer. Howsoever brief the time of study may be, at the beginning of it, definitely lift the heart to God for help and direction.

Make rigid application of the personal thought to the life. Form the habit of recalling often during the day points from the lesson of the morning.

THE AIM AND THE SCOPE OF STUDIES IN OLD TESTAMENT CHARACTERS

While the purpose in "Studies in Old Testament Characters" has been to present for the student a course primarily devotional and practical, it may be that the scope of the Studies, which is larger than anything merely biographical, is not sufficiently indicated by the title.

Not only is the attempt made to interpret each character studied in the light of the immediate historic situation, and to derive valuable personal instruction from utterances, acts and manifest motives, but the relation of each character to a greater national and world movement is to some extent considered. This requires a study of the movement itself. It is sought to know how each age, with its accumulation from the past, grew out of the past and beyond itself and moulded its characters, and how in turn each character moulded his own age and influenced the future.

Characters are personifications of times and products and potentialities. Into the proper study of Old Testament Characters, Old Testament History, Psalm and Prophecy must enter.

Moreover, it should be noted that this course is restricted in its reach by its avowed aim. It must not do critical or much exhaustive work. It takes for granted that there is in the curriculum a certain amount of literary and critical Bible Study. This course is the third of a cycle which is designed to supplement rather than to supersede college class-room work.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 1: ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

1st Day: PRELIMINARY SURVEY

"Biography is the only true history."—*Carlyle*.

The embodiment of ideal character is in Jesus Christ. As these are to be Studies in character, for the purpose of character-building, let the Perfect Model be kept constantly before the mind. This is the more necessary because, since we are to study the records of human lives, we shall often discover imperfections. As an old painter kept before him perfect gems of different colors that by frequent glances he might keep his eye perfectly toned while he wrought, so should the student view every life which he examines in the light of Him who always did those things which pleased the Father.

The necessity of right living on the part of the student in order to be able to discern character cannot be overlooked. Ponder well the meaning of the words of Jesus: "If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light."

The student should reflect as he proceeds, upon the faithfulness with which the record relates the evil that men did as well as the good. The reliability of the record should be judged in the light of this. You have been taught, probably, that the Bible is true because it is of divine origin. If it is truly of divine origin it is true to human nature. God cannot deny Himself, and He has made man. As you study the records ask yourself: Is this true to what I know of man? Would one under such circumstances so act? Apply the psychological test to this Old Testament material.

Write out a list of eight traits of character suggested by the life of Christ. Opposite each of these write the name of some person who in some real measure is an illustration of that particular trait.

Write out a list of eight condemnable traits of character, and proceed as directed in second part of last paragraph.

Read the first Psalm for a description of ideal character. Get the two contrasted scenes there described, vividly before the mind.

PERSONAL THOUGHTS: Which more nearly describes me, the fruit-bearing tree or the wind-driven chaff? Opposite what good traits of character could I conscientiously place my name? Opposite what condemnable traits would I be compelled to place it?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 1: ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

2d Day: PRELIMINARY SURVEY

“Whoever reads these writings, wherein he is equally convinced, let him go on with me; wherein he equally hesitates, let him investigate with me; wherein he finds himself in error, let him return to me; wherein he finds me in error, let him call me back to him. So let us go on together in the way of charity, pressing on toward Him of Whom it is said, Seek ye his face evermore.”—*Augustine*.

Today get before the mind a general view of the scope of these Studies and the method to be pursued. First read the “General Suggestions” on page 3 slowly and thoughtfully.

Glance over the Titles of the Studies, page 2.

Glance at the Table of Contents (Page ix) of OLD TESTAMENT RECORDS, POEMS AND ADDRESSES, the book upon which these Studies are based.

Commit to memory the four *Principal Divisions of the Old Testament History of Abraham and his Posterity*, given on page xi of OLD TESTAMENT RECORDS, POEMS AND ADDRESSES.

Glance rapidly through the Analytical Outline as given on pages xiii to xxiii of OLD TESTAMENT RECORDS, POEMS AND ADDRESSES.

Briefly examine Diagrams I, II, and III, found on pages xxiv-xxvi of OLD TESTAMENT RECORDS, POEMS AND ADDRESSES.

Recall the picture of ideal character given in the first Psalm. Read the fifteenth Psalm, which by one has been appropriately called “The Gentleman’s Psalm.” Read also Matthew 5:1-12; 2 Peter 1:5-9; Galatians 5:22-26.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Have I real acquaintance with the Holy Spirit by whom alone my hands may be made clean and my heart pure? By whom alone my life may be made to abound in the fruit described in these passages of scripture?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 1: ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

3d Day: PRELIMINARY SURVEY

"Let the whole soul be fed by the study of the whole Bible, that so there may be no irregularity or inequality in the growth of its parts and powers."—*H. Bonar*.

Today seek to get a general view of the contents, arrangement and purpose of the book of Genesis.

Read the first and the last verses of Genesis.

Note that the account of the creation of all things is confined to one verse; that the account of the preparation of the earth for man is limited to one chapter; that the account of God's dealing with the fallen race as a whole under Adam and a second time under Noah, ends with the eleventh chapter; and that the record of God's dealing with a single individual (Abraham) and his descendants occupies the remainder of Genesis, and of the whole of the Old Testament.

Note that in both the instances of God's dealing with the race as a whole (*i. e.*, from Adam until Noah and from Noah until Abraham), man failed to respond to God's efforts to reclaim him from sin. Consider the change of policy (but not of purpose) on God's part in dealing with man when and after He called Abraham. Glance at Diagrams II, and III.

Glance at Diagram IV, page xxvii of OLD TESTAMENT RECORDS, POEMS AND ADDRESSES. Read all the statements connected therewith.

Examine Diagram V, in the following order: (1) Read over the chapter titles found in the spaces 1-50, thus refreshing the mind as to the contents of Genesis; (2) Note the general division of the material by the heavy line between 11 and 12 and drop the eye down to the outline under B; (3) Rapidly turn through the book following the suggestions under D about the arrangement of the material. Note especially the narrowing down process; (4) Glance over E-I, but do not look up references.

State in your own words briefly what you conceive to have been the purpose of the author in producing Genesis.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Do I leave today's work satisfied with my past attainments in Bible study? Am I determined by God's help to secure a more thorough and comprehensive grasp of the Word of Life, and to allow it to have larger sway over me?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 1: ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

4th Day: § 1. THE MIGRATION OF THE TERACHITES

§ 2. THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM

"He knoweth the way that I take"—
"That thy way may be known upon earth,
Thy saving health among all nations."

Rapidly read § 1. For a statement of the religion of Abraham's ancestors, read Joshua 24:2 [cf. Deane's ABRAHAM: HIS LIFE AND TIMES, Chapter I, in *Men of the Bible Series*.*]

With v. 31 compare Acts 7:2-4. For confirmation of Stephen's statement read § 2, 15:7, and Nehemiah 9:7 [cf. Deane's ABRAHAM: HIS LIFE AND TIMES, Chapter II.]

Read Hebrews 11:8. How harmonize this with the words "to go into the land of Canaan" in § 1, v. 31? If you do not at once think of an explanation, proceed to the next suggestion.

Read § 2, 12:1-3. Is there any indication here that the writer of the account introduced into § 1, v. 31, his own knowledge of the destination of Abraham, and that Abraham really did not know where he was going when he left home? Cf. § 2, 12:7.

Dwell upon the greatness of the promise which was given to Abraham when he was called to make a great sacrifice. Does God always give more than He takes if we will receive?

What indications does § 2, 12:1-3 give that God was choosing Abraham with a world-wide and beneficent purpose in view? Are we to think of the Jewish Nation as chosen to favoritism or to service? Glance at Diagram II. Note the relation of, and dwell for a moment upon the words, "Be thou a blessing." How fully have the words of vv. 2 and 3 been already verified?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "There is no man that hath left house, or wife, or brethren, or parents, or children, for the Kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more" (Luke 18:29, 30). Do I believe this?

*The student is not expected during the time of daily study to look up references to historical sidelights, nor is it necessary that he do so at all. It is recommended, however, that then he make a note of the same, and that later in the day, or as soon as possible, when the book is accessible, the portions be read.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 1: ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

5th Day: § 2. THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM

“‘To know the Lord.’ That is a bold aim for my finite soul, and yet it will be satisfied with nothing less. It is not by searching thou canst find out God—it is by following Him.”—*Matheson*.

Read § 2, 12:4-9. Three times in Scripture Abraham is called the friend of God. Decide for yourself to what extent this section furnishes an explanation and justification of this unique title. Now read the passages and note what light they throw upon the question. They are: (1) 2 Chronicles 20:7; (2) Isaiah 41:8; (3) James 2:23.

What test of friendship to himself did our Lord name as recorded in John 15:14? Does this fit the case of Abraham? What evidence does this section give that God reciprocated Abraham's friendship? Which of the two took the initiative? What did each do to prove friendship for the other?

Note that God is represented as having already spoken to Abraham on three different occasions: (1) Before he left Ur (see Fourth Day); (2) While he was at Haran (§ 2, 12:1-4); and (3) After he reached Canaan (§ 2, 12:7). Is any progression in revelation observable?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Do I merit the title, Friend of God? If not, have I any right to count upon God as my friend? If I know whom I follow, does it matter if I do not know whither I am going?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 1: ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

6th Day: § 2. THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM

"The heights by great men reached and kept,
Were not attained by sudden flight."

Thoughtfully read § 2, 12:10-13:4. How was finding "the Canaanite in the land" (§ 2, 12:6) followed by a sore famine, calculated to act upon Abraham's faith in God's word? Put yourself in Abraham's place, with all his substance and household, and think how you would feel. Notwithstanding all this, do you think Abraham was justified in going to Egypt?

Consider this severe test of Abraham and his action in Egypt, in the light of what you know of his early training and the sentiment of the times in which he lived.

Read Psalm 105:13-15, and consider how true God was to Abraham in this instance, even when Abraham proved faithless.

Read § 2, 13:5-13. What three commendable traits of character appear in Abraham in his dealing with Lot? Which two of the beatitudes are suggested by Abraham's action here? What unworthy traits of character appear in Lot in this transaction?

Read § 2, 13:14-18. Is there any significance in the words, "After that Lot had separated from him"? Note, "Lot lifted up his eyes" (v. 10), after which God directs Abraham in the words, "Lift up now thine eyes" (v. 14). Lot had his choice for himself after which Abraham was given God's choice for him. What indication is here given that Abraham appreciated God's message to him at this time?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Am I making choice for myself looking upon outward appearances as Lot did, or am I like Abraham allowing God to direct my life, and to choose for me?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 1: ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

7th Day: § 2. THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM

"One idea held by very earnest people, embodied in very faithful and devoted lives, is the strangeness of religion to the life of man, as if some morning something dropped out of the sky that had no place on our earth before, as if there came the summons to man to be something entirely different from what the conditions of his nature prophesied and intended that he should be. The other idea is that religion comes by the revelation of God from the heavens, but comes up under the influence of God out of the human life of man; that man does not become something else than man when he becomes the servant of Jesus Christ, but then for the first time becomes man in his true development; that religion is not something fastened on the outside of life, but is the awakening of the truth inside of his life; that the kingdom of God is but the true fulfilment of human life and society."—*Phillips Brooks*.

Rapidly read § 2, 14:1-24. Locate Sodom, Mamre, Dan and Damascus, in order to have a general idea of the movements referred to. The movement of the invaders was from the northeast. [On the fourteenth chapter of Genesis, cf. Hommel, *THE ANCIENT HEBREW TRADITION AS ILLUSTRATED BY THE MONUMENTS*, chap. v., and Tomkins, *ABRAHAM AND HIS AGE*, chap. xiii.]

Try to secure a vivid conception of Abraham's surroundings and character by considering: (1) His relation to his neighbors, vv. 13, 24; (2) His household equipment, v. 14; (3) His readiness for the emergency, v. 14; (4) His promptness in action, v. 14; (5) His method of attack, v. 15; (6) His pledge before meeting the king of Sodom, v. 22; (7) His recognition by God in the presence and blessing of Melchizedek, vv. 18, 19; (8) His recognition of God in giving a tenth, v. 20; (9) His dependence upon God, v. 22; (10) His independence of man, v. 23; (11) His idea of God, v. 22; (12) His disinterestedness in helping others in need; (13) His treatment of his associates, v. 24.

In the light of the persons here mentioned, and the relation of Abraham to them, consider his influence already in Canaan as a worshiper of the true God.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Am I free from mercenary and selfish ambition? What reputation is it likely my manner of dealing with my fellowmen has given me?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 2: ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

1st Day: § 2. THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM

"Prayer is the breath of God in man,
Returning whence it came."

Read thoughtfully § 2, 15:1. Consider what the author had in mind when he wrote, "After these things." Would Abraham naturally be tempted to think of the possible return of the kings from the North to avenge his action? With this in mind and remembering that Abraham refused to receive even a thread as reward for his service, read the verse again and reflect on the suitableness of this message from God to him.

Rapidly read 15:2-21, noting the division of the material by Abraham's two questions, vv. 2 and 8.

Are we to think of Abraham as presumptuous or humble here in his address to and requests of God? Does the second request (v. 8) indicate unbelief? Which does Abraham here resemble, Zecharias or Mary of Luke, chapter 1?

Analyze carefully the communication from God to Abraham found here (vv. 4, 13-16, 18-20), writing out each particular. This is the fifth recorded instance of revelation from God to Abraham. (See list of first three in Study 1, Fifth Day, under 3.) Add the fourth found in § 2, 13:14-17, and compare its content with your analysis of the fifth. Is progressive revelation discernible?

Consider whether the circumstances attending this communication would tend deeply to impress Abraham's mind. [For interesting sidelight on *passing between the parts*, see Deane's ABRAHAM: HIS LIFE AND TIMES, chapter viii, p. 80.]

Note what God is there represented (1) as claiming for Himself, and (2) as doing for and saying to His friend, and reflect on the significance of the words, "I am the God of Abraham."

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Abraham had definite and impressive dealings with God. Have I had any real evidence that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 2: ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

2d Day: § 2. THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM

The question, "Is it pleasing to God?" was Judson's means of deciding action.

Read rapidly § 2, 16:1-16. Consider whether the account is true to nature in depicting character (1) In Hagar, a servile spirit when suddenly elevated to favor; (2) in Sarah when in a jealous rage; and (3) in Abraham in the light of what you already know of him.

What mitigating circumstances may fairly be considered in thinking of Abraham's action? May the following be admitted? (1) The absence of specific promise to Sarah; (2) the suggestion coming from Sarah; (3) the views of the times about marriage. [See Deane's ABRAHAM: HIS LIFE AND TIMES, chapter ix, p. 90.]

Read 16:3, 16; continue reading rapidly 17:1-27. This is the sixth recorded Theophany in Abraham's life. Note the interval of ten years after reaching Canaan, and the second interval of thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael. Is there any hint at reproof in 17:1? Was the character of God as here revealed adapted to Abraham's need?

Rapidly think through the material, aided by the following outline: (1) the Content of the Covenant, vv. 10, 12, 13; (2) the Continuance of the Covenant, v. 7; (3) the Token of the Covenant, v. 11; (4) the Promise in connection with the Covenant, vv. 6, 7, 8.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Is the message: "*I am God Almighty*," a comfort to me? Has God ever brought me to the place where the thing wrought has been beyond a doubt divine?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 2: ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

3rd Day: § 2. THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM

Of the Bible Prof. Phelps has said: "This volume has never yet numbered among its religious believers a fourth part of the human race, yet it has swayed a greater amount of mind than any other volume the world has ever known. It has the singular faculty of attracting to itself the thinkers of the world, either as friends or foes, always and everywhere."

Read § 2, 18:1-15. Allow the description due influence in bringing this picture of Oriental life vividly before you. Note the simplicity of Abraham's life, his hospitality, his civility, his humility.

This Section records the first communication by God to Sarah concerning Isaac. Does the account give evidence that Sarah was less developed in faith than her husband? v. 13.

Read Heb. 11:11. Does this passage describe the faith which came from the hearing here described? How was Sarah's disposition to doubt removed? Does returning the mind to God tend to dispel doubt?

Is there any indication here that Abraham had not told Sarah of the promise to him recorded in § 2, 17:15, 16? Can you think of any reason for his not having done so?

Does the account give evidence of supernatural knowledge on the part of the visiting speaker?

Read 18:16-33, and 19:28, 29. "The whole passage is singularly felicitous and beautiful in conception and expression."

What reasons are given why Abraham should know of God's purpose concerning Sodom? vv. 17-19. What further reason does the sequel show? 19:29.

What does the record show Abraham's estimate of himself to have been? What his estimate of God? Reflect upon "the God of Abraham" as here set forth. Continue the reflection after reading John 15:15, 16.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant. Am I living such a life as to justify God in revealing Himself in any special manner to me?"

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 2: ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

4th Day: § 2. THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM

"Man has too many enemies than that he can afford to be his own foe."—*Emerson*.

Read rapidly § 2, 20:1-18, and as you do so, be careful to allow sufficiently for the times in which Abraham lived. As one studies the Old Testament, the words of Paul should be often recalled: "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now" (Acts 17 :30).

Note the prominence of prayer as an appointed means to an end in this account, vv. 2, 17. There is no vindication here by God of Abraham's deception of Abimelech. How can you make this appear?

Read § 2, 21:1-8, noting the brevity and the delicacy of the record. Note, "as the Lord commanded him," v. 4.

Read § 2, 21:9-21. Consider the trouble which came into Abraham's life on account of his violation of the law of marriage. Glance at the application of the account of Sarah and Hagar and their sons made by Paul in Galatians, fourth and fifth chapters.

Read § 2, 21:22-34. Consider Abraham's position among his neighbors in Canaan. What characteristics of Abraham appear in this story? What may one learn from today's chapters of God's consideration of man's weakness?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Is God with me in all that I do? Do my associates and neighbors acknowledge it? Is it not my privilege to have God not only with but in me? "He abideth with and shall be in you."

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 2: ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

5th Day: § 2. THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM

Florence Nightingale once gave the secret of her success in the words: "I have never refused God anything."

Read § 2, 22:1,2. Dwell upon what may be legitimately included in the expression, "After these things" (v. 1). Trace here very rapidly Abraham's development by trial, noting the following: (1) the command to leave home; (2) the character of the land to which he went; (3) the character of the inhabitants of that land; (4) the famine; (5) the delay in the birth of the heir.

Consider plausible objections to obedience to this command. Would a shock to Abraham's moral sense be one of these? [cf. Deane's *ABRAHAM: HIS LIFE AND TIMES*, chapter XII, pp. 138, 139.] How were all objections put aside? Read Hebrews 11:17-19. Note with special care v. 17.

With the words, "Accounting God able to raise up, even from the dead" in mind, read § 2, 22:3-19, and decide whether the record here given justifies the conclusion that Abraham expected to kill his son and to see him restored to life.

Read John 8:56. Did our Lord here refer to a single experience of Abraham, or to the whole of his growing appreciation of the fulness of the promises.

Is there anything in this communication to indicate that this was the climax of God's testing of Abraham, and of God's revelation to him? Is there any relation between God's testing of man and God's messages to man? Read Hebrew 6:13-20. On this last occasion on Moriah only was the oath introduced.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Because thou hast not withheld . . . because thou hast obeyed my voice." How does my life stand that test?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 2: ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

6th Day: § 2. THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM

"Our Bible is a book of *lives*. It is a book of men praying, rather than a book of prayer; of men believing, rather than a book of beliefs; of men sinning and repenting and righting themselves, rather than a book of ethics."

Glance at § 2, 22:20-24, noting reference to report to Abraham, and mention of Rebekah.

Read rapidly § 2, 23:1-20, for the picture of Oriental life which it gives, and for the impression which the personality of Abraham seems to have made upon his neighbors.

Reflect upon the confession and request of v. 4. By whom made? Where? After what? Read Heb. 11:9, 10, 13-16.

Rapidly read § 2, 24:1-67, noting repetition of the account by the servant in vv. 34-49. "A beautiful trait in this charming picture of Oriental life and manners, is the variety of form and expression in relating the same occurrences; first as given by the narrator himself to the reader, and then as repeated by him in the mouth of the servant to his little company of interested listeners. The artless variation of the same story delights the reader."

What evidence of faith and far-sightedness in Abraham does this account furnish? Read § 2, 25:1-10, and answer the same question about it.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: While this narrative of Abraham's life represents him as allowing what I condemn, how many things are condemned in me by what Abraham did not allow? Moreover, what of the difference in time and opportunity which is to enter into the judgment?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 2: ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

7th Day: GENERAL REVIEW

"Only that good profits which we can taste with all doors open, and which serves all men."

As you slowly read over the following list of characteristics of Abraham, recall to mind only where you can promptly do so some circumstance illustrative of each: (1) Resolute, (2) Steadfast, (3) Prudent, (4) Tactful, (5) Candid, (6) Kind, (7) Self-controlled, (8) Self-denying, (9) Condescending, (10) Unselfish, (11) Obliging, (12) Hospitable, (13) Courteous, (14) Peaceable, (15) Humble, (16) Thankful, (17) Reverent, (18) Prayerful, (19) Worshipful, (20) Faithful, (21) Obedient.

Refer to Diagram VI, p. xxix of OLD TESTAMENT RECORDS, POEMS AND ADDRESSES. With the aid of it think rapidly through §§ 1, 2, and note the prominence given to the country and the heir, and the blessing which is through them to come on all nations. Think for a moment of Abraham's relation to modern missions.

Refer to Diagram VII, p. xxx of OLD TESTAMENT RECORDS, for a review of the progress of the revelation of God to Abraham. Consider whether growth in Abraham commensurate with his privileges, is discernible.

Two characteristics of "the God of Abraham" are: (1) He is the hearer of prayer; (2) He is a God of large and beneficent plans. Add four more characteristics to the list.

Glance over the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, noting especially vv. 20, 21. Read what is said of Abraham in Hebrews 11.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: To me the message has come: "I am the God of Abraham." What meaning does it convey? Is God as much to me as He was to Abraham? Is He not ready to be more? Am I as much to God as Abraham was? What is the meaning of: "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 3: THE SONS OF ABRAHAM TO THE THIRD GENERATION

1st Day: § 3. NAMES AND DWELLINGS OF THE SONS OF ISHMAEL

§ 4. THE BIRTH AND EARLY HISTORY OF ISAAC'S SONS

"There are but three steps from earth to heaven, or if you will, from earth to hell—acts, habits, character."—*Butler*.

Read § 2, 25:11, and glance at § 3. Now read § 2, 17:18-21.

Rapidly, but with attention, read § 4, vv. 19-28. Note: (1) References to Isaac's age (vv. 20, 26). Do these suggest a time of waiting and faith on the part of Isaac and Rebekah? (2) The prominence assigned to prayer. (3) The reason given why Isaac loved Esau. (4) No reason is specified why Rebekah loved Jacob, but is not one to be found in the passage? How does Isaac compare with Rebekah in the light of this? (5) The directness, vividness and scope of the account. Who could tell more in fewer words and suggest as much?

Attentively read § 4, vv. 29-34. Is it likely that Jacob's mother had told him about the prophecy that the elder should serve the younger? Is this the reason which you assigned under 2 (4) above for Rebekah's love of Jacob? Would this account for Jacob's request of Esau? How else account for this request?

In what did the birthright ordinarily consist? [Cf. Rawlinson's ISAAC AND JACOB, in "Men of the Bible" series, pp. 75, 76. See *Birthright* in a Bible Dictionary.] In what did this birthright consist? For answer read § 2, 12:2, 3, and § 6, vv. 28, 29. Read also Numbers 24:17-19. "This blessing of the firstborn consists of four parts. It promises the one whom it concerns: (1) the promise of the land of Canaan under the divine benediction; (2) the subjection of the nations; (3) the primacy over his brothers; (4) so high a position in redemptive history that blessings and curses are conditioned by the attitude which men take to them who have received the blessing. (Delitzsch: MESSIANIC PROPHECIES, pp. 47, 48.)

PERSONAL THOUGHT: What is my birthright as regards (1) Country, (2) Family, (3) Religion, (4) Education? Do I sufficiently prize it? Am I in danger of bartering it away? Should I not heed the solemn injunction: "Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord: looking carefully lest there be any man that falleth short of the grace of God—as Esau." (Hebrews 12:14, 15.)

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 3: THE SONS OF ABRAHAM TO THE THIRD GENERATION

2d Day: § 4. THE BIRTH AND EARLY HISTORY OF ISAAC'S SONS

§ 5. THE SUBSEQUENT CAREER OF ISAAC

"The quickest way to outgrow rule is to make faithful use of rule."

The reason given by Esau in § 4, v. 32, why he should part with his birthright, indicates what as to his conception of it: that it consisted chiefly in (1) present, fleeting possessions for himself (note: "What profit to me?" v. 32); or, (2) permanent, spiritual blessings to be transmitted to posterity? Read § 5, vv. 34, 35. How does this act of Esau's strengthen the conviction that he was unfit to be the transmitter of the promises?

Re-read § 4, v. 34. Now read Heb. 12:16. Note that Esau is called, not a foolish, but a profane person. Read Rom. 9:10-13; also Mal. 1:2, 3. Does not this account given in Genesis show that the selection of Jacob and the rejection of Esau was not irrespective of moral character? Read again Heb. 12:16. Was Esau rejected before he first rejected?

It is important to observe that while Esau was rejected because he first rejected, Jacob's selection was not due to his worthiness. It was of God, who sheweth mercy that His purpose of grace might stand. "In tracing out Jacob's real character from stage to stage of his extraordinary history, one gets a wondrous view of divine grace. None but God could have borne with such an one, as none but God would have taken up such an one. Grace begins at the very lowest point. It takes up man as he is, and deals with him in the full intelligence of what he is. It is of the very last importance to understand this feature of grace at one's first starting; it enables us to bear with steadiness of heart the after discoveries of personal vileness which so frequently shake the confidence and disturb the peace of the children of God."

Rapidly read § 5. Two Theophanies are here recorded: the one in vv. 2-5; the other in v. 24. Note the reference to country and to posterity in each. Note the mention of Abraham in each. Observe the reference (v. 3) to the oath. Would Isaac likely remember the time when this oath was made? (See § 2, 22:16, for the occasion.)

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Do I (like Esau) look at the things which are seen and temporal, or do I regard the things which are unseen and eternal? Shall I prefer today a present animal gratification, and lose a permanent increment of good?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 3: THE SONS OF ABRAHAM TO THE THIRD GENERATION

3rd Day: § 6. THE BLESSING OF JACOB BY ISAAC

§ 7. THE FORTUNES OF JACOB

"Hell is the truth seen too late."

Rapidly read § 6. Note that not one of the actors here appears in a commendable light. Specify what is to be condemned in each.

Yet there are redeeming traits. Think of any in each of the four characters, and compare your results with the following: (1) Isaac's recognition of the Will of God in the matter is shown in his ratification of his action, v. 33. Read here Hebrews 11:20. Read also § 7, 28:1-5; (2) the words of Rebekah to Jacob, vv. 8, 13, indicate that more than her personal preference for him animated her in the action. Without doubt she had in mind the promise of primacy to Jacob.

Read § 7, 27:41-46, noting the two different presentations of the case made by Rebekah, the one to Jacob, the other to Isaac.

Re-read § 7, 28:3, 4. Note the expression, "the blessing of Abraham." Read Galatians 3:14, 15. How much of the significance of this blessing do you think Isaac and Jacob knew?

Read § 7, 28:6-9. Do you gather from this that Esau's motive in marrying a daughter of Ishmael was to please his parents? Is this action of his to be regarded as a part of his careful search for repentance for which he found no place (Heb. 12:17)? If so, is this further evidence that Esau was wholly unappreciative of and entirely lacking the qualifications demanded of the transmitter of the blessings of Abraham to posterity? In taking a daughter of Ishmael he was not doing so bad a thing as he had done before. Is it a common thing for people to think that they are as good as they ought to be because they are not so bad as they have been? What do you think of the moral and spiritual perception of such persons?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "I thank God that he has given me strength to avoid all tricks" (Gordon in diary at Khartoum). Do I wait on the Lord to accomplish in and for me what He has said, or do I take matters into my own hands? "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass."

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 3: THE SONS OF ABRAHAM TO THE THIRD GENERATION

4th Day: § 7. THE FORTUNES OF JACOB

"No man is any account for the Lord until he knows for himself, without any guesswork, that he has been converted."

Read thoughtfully § 7, 28:10-22, noting: (1) the place; (2) the time; (3) the vision; (4) the message; (5) the vow.

Dwell upon the message of God to Jacob. Recall the parting prayer of Isaac: "God Almighty give thee the blessing of Abraham" (§ 7, 28:3, 4).

Re-read vv. 20-22. Read § 2, 14:20. Jacob is usually regarded as manifesting his bargaining disposition here. Judge whether this was the case. May he not have been pledging himself to thankful recognition of God's favor? Surely this was no ordinary vow. "It is the grand and solemn expression of the soul's full, free and perpetual acceptance of the Lord to be its own God."

Read John 1:47-51. What allusion to this experience of Jacob is in the passage? [Read Critical Note by Wescott on vv. 47, 51, in the Bible Commentary on The Gospel by John.]

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Have I ever been where I have had unquestionable evidence of the presence of God? Have I properly responded to such an experience and as a consequence am I having any fulfillment of the words of our Lord to Nathaniel: "Thou shalt see greater things than these"?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 3. THE SONS OF ABRAHAM TO THE THIRD GENERATION

5th Day: § 7. THE FORTUNES OF JACOB

"The measure of a man's real character is what he would do if he knew it would never be found out."

Rapidly read § 7, 29:1-31:2, noting any traits of character manifested by Jacob in words and acts. Recall in connection with Laban's deception of Jacob, how Jacob had deceived his father. Two bargain makers here have met. Without justifying Jacob's polygamy, give due weight to the manner in which he was married, and to the sentiment and usage of the times; note also the strife which disregard of the marriage law introduced into Jacob's household [cf. Rawlinson's ISAAC AND JACOB, pp. 102, 103].

Read § 7, 31:3-18, noting the prominence which Jacob gives to God as his helper.

Rapidly read § 7, 31:19-55. Note the real meaning of v. 49, which is very different from that popularly understood. God is invoked to watch between and to keep the two from harming each other. Give a second thought to the expression in vv. 42 and 53, "The Fear of his father Isaac."

Read § 7, 32:1, 2. Recall on what previous occasions in Jacob's life the ministry of angels has been mentioned (§ 7, 28:12; 31:11). Read Heb. 1:13, 14, and Psalm 91:10, 11.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: As I review my career, unworthy as Jacob though I am, is there any evidence that the guiding hand of God has been in my life? Do I believe that great as is man's control over nature, he cannot hope to prosper without the favor of God?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 3: THE SONS OF ABRAHAM TO THE THIRD GENERATION

6th Day: § 7. THE FORTUNES OF JACOB

"Vision is the art of seeing the invisible."—*Swift*.

Thoughtfully but rapidly read § 7, 32:3-21. The core of this passage is the singularly beautiful and well-ordered prayer of Jacob found in vv. 9-12.

Giving attention to the prayer (vv. 9-12), note: (1) What evidence of humility in Jacob it presents; (2) In what words Jacob acknowledges the goodness of God; (3) On what ground he makes his plea; (4) How often he refers to what God had said.

Read 32:22-32. Observe: (1) Jacob had sought solitude, and was probably in prayer; (2) "There wrestled a man." The initiative was taken by the other; (3) The persistence of Jacob, one of his most prominent traits of character, is here manifested. He persists in resisting until his thigh is touched, and then he persists in clinging until the blessing is bestowed; (4) The evidence that the stranger was a heavenly visitor, v. 30 (cf. Hosea 12:4); (5) The changed name and character after the confession and blessing. This was the great spiritual crisis in Jacob's life. In after days he was a different man. [For excellent summary of the character of Jacob see Rawlinson's ISAAC AND JACOB, pp. 183-185.]

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." (Jacob means guile, deceit.) Psalm 32, 2. Am I described by these words?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 3: THE SONS OF ABRAHAM TO THE THIRD GENERATION

7th Day: § 7. THE FORTUNES OF JACOB

"Spirituality is the aspiration and tendency of the life toward the divine in thought and action as animated and controlled by the Holy Spirit."

Read very rapidly 33:1-35:29, noting the various advances of Jacob from place to place, and observing what is profitable for instruction or reproof. Refer to map for Succoth, Shechem, Beth-el, Hebron.

Glance over the following passages, which give in order the recorded Theophanies in the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and as you do so, observe: (1) The method of revelation, whether by vision, or dream, or otherwise; (2) The content of promise. (3) The instances of specific guidance in each life; (4) Where the climax of revelation appears. Is anything of importance revealed after Abraham's death? (5) The prominence given in the divine communications to the fact that these men figured in a world-embracing and beneficent plan. The passages are: (1) § 2, 12:1-3; (2) § 2, 12:7; (3) § 2, 13:14-17; (4) § 2, 15:1,4,5,7,13-16; (5) § 2, 17:1-22; (6) § 2, 18:10-15, 20-32; (7) § 2, 20:3,6,7; (8) § 2, 21:12,13; (9) § 2, 22:1,2; (10) § 2, 22:15-18; (11) § 4, 25:23; (12) § 5, 26:2-5; (13) § 5, 26:24; (14) § 7, 28:12-15; (15) § 7, 31:3,9-13; (16) § 7, 31:24; (17) § 7, 32:1,2; (18) § 7, 32:24-30; (19) § 7, 35:11; (20) § 7, 35:9-13.

Dwell for a moment upon the character of the God who declares Himself to be "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob."

PERSONAL THOUGHT: At Bethel God said to Jacob: "I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Do I find comfort and encouragement in the faithfulness of God?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 4: THE SONS OF ABRAHAM TO THE FOURTH GENERATION

1st Day: § 8. THE WICKEDNESS OF JACOB'S SONS

"It is perhaps the highest triumph we can obtain over bigotry, when we are able to bear with bigots themselves."

Rapidly review the general outline of Genesis (Diagram V). Read over the headings of Chapters I.-V., Part I., of the Analytical Outline, p. xiii., of OLD TESTAMENT RECORDS, etc. Compare these with A of Diagram V. Note under B of the Diagram the six names about which the material in Genesis is grouped.

Read 37:2-36, noting especially the parts taken by Reuben and Judah, and recalling the deception by Jacob of his father Isaac with the skins of kids upon his wrists and neck.

Read rapidly 38:1-30. Do you think of any reasons for the introduction of this account into the record? Compare these reasons with the following: Judah's assignment to the leadership (§ 13, 49:10) may account for the record of the birth of Perez. Moreover we have here a glimpse of the character of the heathenism under the influence of which Judah came. The removal and isolation of Israel in Egypt, involved in the selling of Joseph, seems to be justified by this picture. "At this time Israel had neither possessions nor family alliances in Canaan. They would soon have sought both; and the character already manifested by Jacob's sons augured ill for their preserving either purity or piety among the Canaanites" (Smith in O. T. HISTORY, p. 113).

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "And as for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good to save much people alive" (§ 15, 50:20). Do I look for the good purpose of God even in reverses which come into my life?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 4: THE SONS OF ABRAHAM TO THE FOURTH GENERATION

2d Day: § 9. THE FORTUNES OF JOSEPH IN EGYPT

"Every upward aspiration is God's angel undefiled;
And in every 'O my Father,' slumbers deep a 'Here, my child.'"

Read § 9, 39:1-6, noting what is given as the secret of the success of Joseph.

Read 39:7-18. Consider the greatness of the temptation: (1) It came in the person of his mistress; (2) It opened the way to preferment; (3) It was perilous to oppose; (4) Opportunity was favorable, v. 11. Consider how the temptation was resisted: (1) Reason came to Joseph's aid. He reckoned that by doing this he would be wronging his master and offending God; (2) He avoided occasion. Only when duty required did he go in the way of it; (3) He was prompt and determined in repelling the attack.

Dwell for a moment upon Joseph's estimate of that to which he was tempted: "This great wickedness"—"Sin against God." Consider what an exceptional character Joseph was in view of the times in which he lived. But are we not sometimes in danger of allowing too much that character is produced by the times? Are all good now? This experience of Joseph suggests the words: "Be thou as pure as ice, as chaste as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny."

Rapidly read 39:19-40:23. Consider: (1) Joseph's capability as evinced both in the house of Potiphar, and in prison; (2) The providential preparation by trial and work which he received for his future public career; (3) His sympathy; (4) His ability to win and to hold confidence. Think for an instant of what is essential to this last.

Read rapidly 41:1-57, noting the prominence given by Joseph to God.

Read Psalm 105:16-22.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Do I regard sin as against God? Is the presence of God a reality to me, and a deterrent from sin? Do I avoid the occasion of sin, and am I prompt and vigorous in repelling temptation?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 4. THE SONS OF ABRAHAM TO THE FOURTH GENERATION

3d Day: § 10. THE FAMINE IN THE LAND OF CANAAN

"Be sure your sin will find you out."

Read § 10, 42:1-38. Note v. 9. What place did Joseph's dreams likely have in his endurance since his departure from Canaan? Observe his tender consideration as indicated in v. 18. Account for the apparent harshness with his brethren? Did he wish to test them? Recall what Reuben did and said the day Joseph was sold (§ 8, 37:22, 29).

Read rapidly 43:1-44:3, judging as to the historicity of the account: (1) Note especially vv. 6-8, and the naturalness of the address to the steward while waiting, vv. 19-22. (2) Note Judah's appeal to his father, vv. 8-10. Compare it with Reuben's, 42:37, and note its dignity and force. (3) Recall Judah's part in selling Joseph, § 8, 37:26, 27. (4) Do not miss the touching tenderness of Jacob's reply to Judah, 43:11-14. (5) Observe the words of the steward, v. 23. Where does the tenderness of Joseph appear? Where his self-control?

Read § 10, 44:14-34. Judah's plea is a literary gem. It is unstudiedly artful and unforcedly rhetorical. It is sustained, pathetic, simple, dramatic. "A more moving oration than oratory ever pronounced." The entire story of Joseph is a masterpiece of composition. Some day read the entire account aloud without interruption.

Rapidly read § 10, 45:1-28, noting the simplicity and beauty of the narrative, and the prominence given to God in his life by Joseph.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "We are verily guilty concerning our brother. . . . Behold, his blood is required" (42:21, 22). Thus spake the brothers of Joseph years after they had sold him. Am I free from the shadow of unforgiven sin? "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 4: THE SONS OF ABRAHAM TO THE FOURTH GENERATION

4th Day: § 11. THE DESCENT OF JACOB TO EGYPT

§ 12. THE SETTLEMENT OF JACOB AND HIS FAMILY IN EGYPT

"O Thou that hearest prayer,
To Thee shall all flesh come."

Read § 11, 46:1-7. Locate Beersheba on the map, and cf. § 2, 21:33, and § 5, 26:23, 24, for experiences of Abraham and Isaac there. The heart of this passage is the message of God to Jacob, vv. 3, 4. From the answer of God construct the prayer of Jacob which he probably offered. Compare the result with the following: "Shall I go down into Egypt? I remember the trouble my grandfather had in that land, and that my father was prohibited from going to it. Will God indeed go with me to Egypt, and shall I return again to this land? Is Joseph my son yet really alive? I am in great fear and uncertainty. Come to my help, O God of my fathers." Read here § 2, 15:13, 14. Did Jacob know and probably think of this at Beersheba?

As Jacob is on the borderland journeying toward Egypt, record any permanent advantages to the Israelites of the proposed sojourn in Egypt. Preserve these for future reference, as the subject will come up later.

Read 46:28-30, noting the tender love of Joseph for his father. Locate Goshen [cf. Sayce's HIGHER CRITICISM AND THE MONUMENTS, pp. 234-237].

Read § 12. Give due recognition to the fact that Israel dwelt apart in Egypt. Note the emphasis of the temporary character of the stay of Israel in Egypt (v. 4). What estimate of Jacob do you form from his interview with Pharaoh?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Recall the frequent definite directions given Jacob by God. (Cf. Study 3, Seventh Day, 2, (14)-(20). Have I given myself sufficiently to prayer for guidance in distinct crises in my life, or have I decided what to do in the light of advice of friends and seeming providential indications only?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 4: THE SONS OF ABRAHAM TO THE FOURTH GENERATION

5th Day: § 13. THE LAST DAYS OF JACOB IN EGYPT

"Enough to know that through the winter's frost
And summer's heat, no seed of truth is lost,
And every duty pays at last its cost."

Read rapidly § 13, 47:13-26. In judging of Joseph's famine policy, consider his character and career before and after, and allow for our ignorance of the times and circumstances. Do not omit to note v. 25. "The changes which the administration of Joseph is said to have made in the land-tenure of Egypt, find support in Egyptian history." [Cf. Sayce in HIGHER CRITICISM AND THE MONUMENTS, p. 216.]

Read 47:28-31. Why was Jacob so particular about being buried in Canaan?

Read 48:1-22. Note: (1) The aged patriarch's testimony to the goodness of God, vv. 3, 15, 16; (2) Get the scene vividly before you of the old man with the power of physical vision gone, yet possessing keen spiritual sight. Contrast his father Isaac; (3) Jacob's reminder of the return from Egypt, v. 21. Seventeen years in the best of the land had not weakened him in his purpose to return.

Read 49:1-12. Consider: (1) The sentence on Reuben and the reason; (2) The sentence on Simeon and Levi and the reason; (3) The prominence given to Judah. Read Heb. 7:14.

Considering more in detail the blessing of Judah, verify the following. (1) He will be victorious. Read Psalm 18:40; (2) He will be supreme among his brethren. Read Psalm 60:7; (3) He will be the royal tribe; (4) He will be qualified for leadership. Read Rev. 5:5.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: As I review my life from the present moment, can I heartily use the words of Jacob: "God, which hath fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which hath redeemed me from all evil"?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 4. THE SONS OF ABRAHAM TO THE FOURTH GENERATION

6th Day: § 13. THE LAST DAYS OF JACOB IN EGYPT

"The history of the nations is not a record of the clash and conflict of forces, but of the stately steppings of a holy God working out His most wise purposes."

Read 49:13-21, noting how rapidly these sons are passed, and grasping the central thought in the blessing of each.

Dwell for a moment upon v. 18. It is apparently out of connection, yet it is in vital relation with the whole. [Read explanations in the Bible Commentary and the Pulpit Commentary.]

Read vv. 22-27. To Judah was given authority; to Joseph property. How does Jacob explain Joseph's victory? Note the words "shepherd" and "stone," v. 24, and consult the marginal reading.

Read vv. 28-33. Observe the repetition of the charge about Canaan. Is the emphasis of the return to Canaan by Jacob to be accounted for merely on the ground of sentiment? Read the first clause of Hebrews 11:21. In what did the fitness of Jacob to transmit the promises, as contrasted with the unfitness of Esau, chiefly consist? Read Hebrews 11:1. "The substance, the strength of the chosen family, the true inheritance of the promise of Abraham, was interwoven with the very essence of the character of the 'plain man dwelling in tents,' steady, persevering, moving onward with settled purpose, through years of suffering and of prosperity, of exile and return, of bereavement and recovery—the birthright is always before him."

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Do I appreciate the vitality of a faith which so long ago could produce such a death-bed scene as that of Jacob? Let me dwell upon it for a while with the key expression which looks both backward and forward in mind: "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord."

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 4: THE SONS OF ABRAHAM TO THE FOURTH GENERATION

7th Day: § 14. THE LAST OF JACOB'S SONS

"History is philosophy teaching by example."

Read the section throughout. (1) Estimate the moral obtuseness of Joseph's brethren as indicated by their action described in v. 15. They appear to have been unable to appreciate the capacity of a forgiving nature such as Joseph possessed. (2) Dwell upon Joseph's reply. What characteristics are here exhibited? (3) Note Joseph's assurance concerning the future, v. 24. Read Heb. 11:22; also Joshua 24:32.

In the light of the account of Joseph, given in Genesis, what is your estimate of the opinion that he is one of the most faultless characters of the Bible?

Read slowly the following list of traits in Joseph, noting in what instances the illustrative circumstance in his life comes readily to mind: (1) Tact; (2) Frankness; (3) Guilelessness; (4) Sensitiveness; (5) Purity; (6) Humility; (7) Wisdom; (8) Executive ability; (9) Filial affection; (10) Energy; (11) Resolute unswerving adherence to duty; (12) Prudence; (13) Self-control; (14) Faith; (15) Hope; (16) Sympathy; (17) Delicate consideration for the feelings of others; (18) Thoughtfulness.

As you review the life of Joseph ask yourself: (1) What was his most prominent trait of character? (2) What was his most significant utterance? (3) In what respects did he further the preparation of the world for Christ? (4) In what respects is he suggestive of Christ and His life?

Spend a few minutes in rapidly reviewing Diagrams I.-VII., with especial reference to securing a comprehensive view not only of the portion already covered, but also of the entire field of study. Do not miss the stimulus which comes from frequent bird's-eye views. Recognize fully the fact that we are studying men who by God were equipped and used each in a large way for the working out of His plan of redemption.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: At this stage of my Bible study, with what degree of heartiness can I express the following sentiments?

"Thy testimonies are wonderful:

Therefore doth my soul keep them."

"Order my footsteps in Thy word;

And let not iniquity have dominion over me."

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 5: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

1st Day: § 15. THE BIRTH, TRAINING AND CALL OF MOSES

"He who loves goodness, harbors angels, reveres reverence, and lives with God."

Repeat aloud the four General Divisions of the Old Testament History of Abraham and His Posterity, found on p. xi of O. T. RECORDS.

As rapidly as may be consistent with a clear grasp of the facts, read § 15, 1:1-4:17 without interruption, and at once after reading, record the three most striking impressions resulting.

Compare these impressions with the following: (1) The comprehensiveness and minuteness of the chain of providences reaching from Joseph to Moses; (2) The mistake of Moses exhibiting essential qualifications for his later life-work, such as, sympathy with the oppressed, readiness to imperil personal safety in behalf of others, indignation at wrong doing, promptness, assertiveness; (3) The existing disqualifications for his later work manifested by this act; (4) The length and varied character of the discipline of Moses for his epoch-making career (cf. Acts 7:22). Did any element likely enter more largely into this than the training of his mother? (5) The objections brought by Moses to undertaking his work, viz.: The power of Pharaoh, the unbelief of Israel, and personal unfitness, together with the answers to these objections given by God.

What in the present study has suggested the following? (1) "It is never too early to begin to prepare for large results"; (2) "The ripening of a purpose is not always the mark of the presence of an opportunity."

Read Hebrews 11:23-27.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Is my faith of like quality with that of Moses as set forth in the passage just read?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 5: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

2d Day: § 15. THE BIRTH, TRAINING AND CALL OF MOSES

"God, when He makes the prophet, does not unmake the man."—*Locke.*

Rapidly read § 15, 4:18-7:7, and immediately record the three most striking thoughts or impressions.

In your reading did you notice the contrast in 4:22, 23, indicated by the words, "my first born," "thy first born"? (Cf. Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:15.) Were you impressed (1) by the remnant of hesitancy to do what God directed which still clung to Moses, and (2) by the considerateness of God for His servant (cf. § 15, 5:22-6:1; 6:28-7:5)?

Dividing Moses' career into three periods of forty years each (cf. Acts 7:23; § 15, 7:7; § 21, 34:7), and considering the first two as preparatory, how would you answer the following questions? (1) In which period did Moses likely receive the chief part of his political training? (2) His intellectual? (3) His physical? (4) His social? (5) His moral and religious? (6) In what part of his life did he have the best opportunity of being "God Almighty's Scholar"? (7) Did his training cease at the end of the second period of his life?

Read § 15, 5:2; 6:3, 6; and 7:5, and reflect for a moment upon the contact of Israel with Egypt, and the resulting judgments and deliverances as a stage in the revelation to mankind of God's character and modes of dealing with men and nations. Do you think the expression "by my name Jehovah was I not known" (6:3), refers to the name itself, or to its significance as the performer of promises?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Is God known to me as the personification of power merely, or do I know Him as the One who has proved Himself true to His word?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 5: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

3d Day: §16. THE PLAGUES AND THE PASSOVER

“All men are commanded by the saint.”

Glance over the paragraphs in § 16, noting the names of the plagues in order. For evidence of the climacteric order, note: (1) the nature of the visitations; (2) The references to the magicians, 7:11, 12, 22; 8:7, 18, 19; 9:11; (3) The effect upon the Egyptians, 9:20, 21; 10:7; 11:3, 8; 12:33; (4) The effect upon Pharaoh, 7:13, 22, 23; 8:8, 15, 19, 25, 28, 32; 9:7, 12, 27, 30, 34, 35; 10:8, 11, 16, 20, 24-29; 11:1; 12:30-32.

Recall the question of Pharaoh (§ 15, 5:2) and read the following passages, thinking as you do so of the answer as given in these acts of Jehovah, remembering that this was a series of death strokes to Egyptian idolatry: § 15, 7:5; § 16, 7:17; 8:10; 9:14-16, 29; 10:2. “What God did in Egypt was for a *sign* to men, He poured shame and ruin on the beast-worship, water-worship, sun-worship, and tyranny of the land.” [For excellent summary of the relation of this series of plagues to Egyptian idolatry, see Dr. W. M. Taylor’s *MOSES THE LAWGIVER*, p. 90.]

In regard to the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, note: (1) That Pharaoh is represented as acting freely (§ 16, 7:11, 13, and passages in each succeeding paragraph); (2) That God is represented as repeatedly warning Pharaoh against the result of persistent disobedience. Read § 16, 9:14-17, and observe that the real meaning is that God endured with much long-suffering the conduct of Pharaoh for purposes of self-revelation. Jehovah did harden Pharaoh’s heart, but He did it by showing him mercy.

Consider the probable effect of this series of signs upon (1) The children of Israel; (2) Upon Moses. Read Psalm 103:6-9.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Is my repentance of sin, like Pharaoh’s, actuated by servile fear, and therefore superficial and transient, resulting in a hardening of heart; or does it originate in an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, and is it consequently permanent and regenerative?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 5: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

4th Day: §16. THE PLAGUES AND THE PASSOVER

"From the first Israel had within her a spirit, and before her an ideal."

Read rapidly but carefully the passage for today, (§ 16, 11:1-12:36), and record the three most striking thoughts.

Re-read 11:2, 3, and 12:35, 36 (cf. § 15, 3:22). Decide whether the context indicates that the Egyptians expected the return of the jewels, or that this was regarded by both sides as a moderate remuneration for long service, and a compensation for cruel wrongs.

Reflect upon what would naturally be the effect of the sojourn in Egypt upon the religious life of Israel. Does the apparently universal obedience to the direction of Moses and Aaron in the matter of the passover indicate a general revival among the Israelites? If so, what produced this?

Consider the memorial nature of this feast of the passover (which to this day is observed by the Jews) and read again 12:24-27.

Note the following and decide whether there was in this feast a symbolic and prophetic element: (1) The lamb was to be without blemish; (2) The blood protected those who used it as directed. It availed by its effect on God rather than on the people; (3) The flesh of the sacrifice nourished the people; (4) Read John 1:29; 19:33, 36; 1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; Rev. 5:6, 12; (5) Read John 6:47-64 and consider whether a reference to the passover is involved; (6) Does a fair induction of the passages justify the following statement? "It is only as Christ is apprehended as the sacrifice for sins, that he becomes food for the soul." Read Heb. 11:27.

This study has been about the first passover night. If you have time, reflect upon the events of the last passover night as recorded in Luke 22, and John 13.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "This month shall be to you the beginning of months." Has my life seen deliverance from the bondage of sin which obedience to God in the matter of His provision for me in Jesus Christ insures?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 5: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

5th Day: § 17. THE EXODUS AND THE JOURNEY TO SINAI

"History was born on the night when the children of Israel went out of Egypt."—*Bunsen*.

Read § 17, 12:37-14:31, and record the three most striking impressions.

Re-read 13:17 and 14:4 for reasons why the Israelites were turned from the direct route to Canaan. (Cf. Deut. 8:2; 32:10, 11; Psalm 107:7.)

Re-read 13:8-10 for emphasis of duty to future generations.

Read 13:19, and recall the thought of § 14.

Read § 17, 15:1-21. In reference to the song, note: (1) It is strictly monotheistic; (2) It is free from mythological coloring; (3) There is no glorification of mere force in it; (4) There is clear recognition of the personality, providence, supremacy, holiness and retributive justice of God.

There are many references in the O. T. to the crossing of the Red Sea. Glance at the following passages: Psa. 74:12-14; Psa. 77:15-20; Psa. 78:12, 13; Psa. 106:9; Psa. 136:13-15; Isa. 63:13, 14; Isa. 51:9, 10.

Think of any benefits accruing to Israel as a nation from their sojourn in Egypt. Would the following be included? (1) Possession of the arts and sciences of the times; (2) Training in endurance and hardship; (3) Increase of numbers without intermixture with foreigners. Is the most important benefit here noted?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." (Prov. 29:1.) Is there any sin in my life which I have been indulging, in spite of frequent warnings?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 5: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

6th Day: § 17. THE EXODUS AND THE JOURNEY TO SINAI

Referring to the Outline of Exodus (Diagram VIII., "OLD TEST. RECORDS"), note: (1) The Mount Sinai chapter is the 19th, and is therefore very near the middle of the book. You might help fix the location and order of the material in Exodus by drawing a line from the top of the 19th chapter space to the bottom of the 1st, and another to the bottom of the 40th, thus indicating the place of the mountain of the book; (2) Glance over the titles of chapters as given in the chapter spaces, and observe the following couplets: The Bulrushes and the Bush, the Sea and the Song, the Bread and the Water, the Mount and the Law, the Vision and the Veil. Look away from the Diagram and try to give the numbers and the names of these couplets, locating them in imagination in their proper places; (3) Read what is below the chapter numbers in the Diagram.

Read very rapidly § 17, 15:22-19:2, noting from the Diagram the relation of this portion to the whole of the book of Exodus. Record at once after reading two strong impressions or prominent thoughts. Read § 21, 25:17, 18.

Did you in reading notice: (1) The recognition of Israel's need to know God more fully (16:12; 18:11); (2) the qualifications of men fit to rule (18:21); (3) the large influence of Jethro upon the organization of Israel (ch. 18)? What influence do you think Jethro had upon Moses during the second forty years of his life?

Read John 6:26-40 about the *true bread* from heaven, and in connection with the supply of water from the rock, read 1 Cor. 10:4.

Prayer on the part of Moses is mentioned in 15:25 and in 17:4, and it is strongly suggested in the story of Amalek (cf. synonymous parallelism in the words, "Let my prayer be set before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice"). Did you, in reading about the plagues, notice the frequent references to Moses as a man of prayer? See the following passages: § 16, 8:8, 9, 28, 29; 9:28, 29; 10:17; 14:15.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "The people strove with Moses, and..... Moses cried unto the Lord." Am I accustomed to go to God in time of trouble?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 5: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

7th Day: § 18. LEGISLATION AT SINAI

Read § 18, 19:2-25; 20:1, 18-21. Think of what in this display would emphasize: (1) The divine power and majesty, and (2) the holiness of God. Note: "the people cannot come" "thou shalt come" (19:23, 24). What do these words in their entire context suggest?

"No revelation that God has made of Himself has ever been so terrible in its material accompaniments as that at Sinai, and no occasion can ever be conceived of as more needing the employment of solemn, startling and impressive circumstances. Here was a people gross of heart, delighting in fleshpots, debased by slavery, careless of freedom, immoral, inclined to idolatry, which had to be elevated into God's living witness among the nations, the depository of His truth, the teacher of the rest of mankind for ages. Given the object of impressing such a nation permanently with the convictions that it had received a divine revelation, and that very dreadful consequences would follow the neglect of it, and the need of the thunders and other terrors of Sinai becomes manifest."—*Rawlinson*.

The core of today's portion is the Decalogue. Try to read 20:2-17 as you would read a passage which you had never seen. Immediately record your impressions. Note the following: (1) In the first four, which relate to man's obligation to God, are emphasized in order, the being, the worship, the name, and the day of God; (2) In the last six, which relate to man's duty to man, are emphasized in order, the home, the neighbor's life, his wife, his property, and his reputation; (3) The Decalogue begins with the state of the mind toward God, and ends with the state of mind toward man; (4) The sum of the Decalogue is love. Cf. Rom. 13:10. Read Matt. 22:34-40; Deut. 6:4, 5. (5) Reflect on the moral tone of these commandments and the prominence which they give to the supremacy and spirituality of God.

"Now to Abraham were the promises. . . . What then is the law? It was added because of transgression" (Gal. 3:16-19). Consider the negative character of the Decalogue in the light of this statement. Spend a few moments on our Lord's interpretation of the law, found in Matt. 5:21-48, and afterwards read Heb. 12:18-29.

- **PERSONAL THOUGHT:** "God sending His own Son, condemned sin in the flesh, that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3, 4). Does the law condemn me, or is its requirement fulfilled in me because I walk by the Spirit?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 6: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

1st Day: § 18. LEGISLATION AT SINAI

"At starting, each of us, according to our disposition, is conscious of liking some books of Scripture better than others. This, however, should lead us to recognize that, in some way, we specially need the teaching that is less attractive to us. We should set ourselves to study what we less like; till that, too, has had its proper effect in moulding our conscience and shaping our character."—*Canon Gore*.

While much of the material for a few days to come has not directly to do with character study, the importance of a general acquaintance with it in this course will be recognized: (1) because of the frequent references and allusions to this legislation which will be found in the study of lives of later times; and (2) because of the influence of these laws in the formation of some of the characters whom we shall study.

Chapters 20:22-24:11 of § 18 embraces the contents and an account of the sealing of what is known as "the Book of the Covenant" (cf. 24:7). Glance over these chapters, reading 24:1-11. What does 18:16-20 suggest as to the existence of at least some of these laws before this ratification of them? Ask yourself what progress in civilization the community had made for whose use these laws were designated?

Glance at the Diagram of Exodus, and note the relation of the material in c. 25-40 to the whole.

Get such an idea of the contents of 25:10-31:18 as your time will permit. Read Hebrews 9:1-14; 10:19-22. The central thought in the Tabernacle seems to be that "God's holiness can only be approached step by step, whilst the road by which we must approach it is that which will insure for us growth in holiness. 'The pure in heart shall see God'; the beatific vision is for those only whose spiritual eyesight has been prepared for its reception. We cannot come up to the throne of God save through the outer court and through the sanctuary; sacrifice and cleansing, illumination and communion; then for those who can receive it, the open vision and the presence of God."

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Having boldness to enter into the holy place . . . let us draw near." Read again Hebrews 10:19-22, and as you do so, ask yourself: Do I know by experience what it is to enter into the very presence of God?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 6: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

2d Day: § 18. LEGISLATION AT SINAI

"O come, let us worship and bow down;
Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker:
For He is our God."—*Psalm 95*.

Passing chapters 32-34 for the present, simply glance over 35-40, which contains in the main a *verbatim* repetition in a somewhat modified order of 25-31, with the substitution of the past tense for the future. A summary of the parts of the Tabernacle and its furniture, and the garments of the priests, is in 35:10-19. Note the emphasis of willingheartedness in 35:5, 20-29. (Cf. 25:9.) One of the characteristic expressions of c. 35-40 is "*as the Lord commanded Moses*." Glance over the chapters, especially 39, 40, for this. Read 38:21, and 40:33-38.

Returning to chapters 32-34, we shall find unparalleled justification for the title of this study in the effectual mediation of Moses. Read 32:14, 34; 33:14; 34:10. Now go over the chapters getting clearly in mind: (1) the occasion of the mediation (32:1-6); (2) The first plea and the result secured (32:7-14); (3) The second plea and the result (32:31-33:11); (4) The third plea and the result (33:12-14); (5) The fourth plea and the result (33:15-17). Compare your results with the following: "The first concession won from God saved them from destruction; the second drew from Him a promise that He would send His 'angel' to guide them into the land of Canaan, though Jehovah personally refused to go with them; the third prevailed on Him to cancel this refusal and to go with them Himself; and the fourth resulted in the complete re-establishment of the Covenant between Jehovah and Israel." Read 19:5, 6; and then 33:16, 17.

In what is the disinterestedness of Moses most clearly manifest? See 32:10, 32. Read again 33:13-16 and note the words "I and thy people? Is it not that thou goest with us", following "I will give thee rest." Dwell on this until you grasp clearly that Moses declines to be separated in thought from the people. Read John 17:9, 10, 23, 24.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "A friend of mine . . . because of his opportunity he will give him as many as he needeth . . . How much more shall your heavenly Father give." (Cf. Luke 11:5-13.) Am I availing myself of the privileges in prayer which are given me in Christ?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 6: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

3d Day: § 18. LEGISLATION AT SINAI

"It is the best sign of a great nature that it opens a foreground, and, like the breath of morning landscapes, invites us onward."—*Emerson*.

Read the request of Moses (§ 18, 33:18) which followed his successful pleading for the people, indicating that he longed for a fuller revelation of God than had yet been vouchsafed to him. Here review the revelation which God had already made to Moses, and note whether there is indication of progress in it: (1) § 15, 3:5, 6, 13-15; (2) The revelation in the plagues and overthrow of the Egyptians; (3) The revelation in the provision of food and water, and of constant guidance and protection; (4) The revelation at Sinai.

Read c. 34 for account of fuller revelation of God to Moses. What was the physical effect upon him (vv. 29-35)? What spiritual effect (vv. 8, 9)? What was the revelation (vv. 5-7)? What advance is this on the revelation at the bush?

Following the answer to Moses' request, is a summary of the conditions of the Covenant now renewed by God with Israel (cf. The Book of the Covenant, c. 21-23). Glance over this (34:10-28), noting especially vv. 10-16, and think of its bearing on the extermination of the Canaanites. Here for the first time idolatry is referred to under the figure of breaking the marriage bond.

Glance at the last verses of chap. 34, and read 2 Cor. 3:12-18.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "So Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Ex. 40:33, 34). "The Holy Spirit whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32). Have I fulfilled the conditions of reception of God into my life? Am I with unveiled face beholding the glory of God, and as a consequence being transformed into the same image from glory to glory?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 6: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

4th Day: § 18. LEGISLATION AT SINAI

"Tho' Sin too oft, when smitten by Thy rod
Rail at 'Blind Fate' with many a vain 'Alas!'
From sin through sorrow into Thee we pass
By that same path our true forefathers trod;
And let not Reason fail me, nor the sod
Draw from my death Thy living flower and grass,
Before I learn that Love, which is and was,
My Father, and my Brother, and my God."—*Tennyson*.

This day and the three following will be given to the Book of Leviticus. Chapters 1-7 constitute the portion for today. Referring to Diagram IX, "O. T. RECORDS," read what is found in the spaces above the chapter figures 1-7; also all that is found in the spaces A-G. Look up the references in B.

Try today more than ever you have done to extract the thought of paragraphs without reading every word or even every sentence. For example such words and expressions in the first chapter, vv. 3-9, as *Burnt-offering, without blemish, door of the tent, hand on head, make atonement, the priest shall present*, give the thought of the whole. Spend five minutes at this exercise on c. 1-7, writing out the result as you proceed, and see what you have.

Underline the phrase *without blemish* as found in c. 1-3. Note the frequency of reference in c. 4 to the offerer laying hands on the head of the victim. What did this signify?

Note in c. 4, 5 the frequent reference to *forgiveness*. Trace, in one instance of the use of the word, the steps leading up to it. Compare your result with 5:1, 2, 5, 6, 10. Observe the order in 5:15, 16.

What is the occasion of all these offerings? Glance through c. 4-6 and note the frequency with which *sin* is mentioned.

What does c. 7 say about *thanksgiving*?

What remaining time you may have, may very profitably be employed in reading most thoughtfully Hebrews 10:1-22.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "A living sacrifice . . . your reasonable service." "I die daily." Do I?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 6: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

5th Day: § 18. LEGISLATION AT SINAI

"If it be said, 'O there are so many things in the Scriptures—sins, vices, crimes, wickedness,'—certainly. God wants to show us what the world is in which we live, and the anatomy of our own heart; but as God alone can describe it, in its real nature and depth, and in such a way that the poison is, as it were, hermetically sealed—not like the wicked and filthy literature of the world which tries to make evil appear attractive and guilt excusable."—*Saphir*.

Run through c. 11-15; underlining the words *clean* and *unclean* in your Bible, and noting very generally the thought. The distinction between clean and unclean food laid down in the Mosaic Law coincides with our natural instinct and observation. Read 11:44-47; 15:31, for the spiritual basis of these requirements. Read 12:8 and Luke 2:21-24. Reflect on the humble position of these parents.

Two historical portions remain in Leviticus, the one in c. 24:10-23; the other in c. 8-10. Read the former rapidly and note in particular: (1) The side light which this throws upon the relation to Israel, to some extent at least, of the mixed multitude which went up with them out of Egypt; and (2) the indication that God was waited on to make known His will in the case.

C. 8-10 gives an account of the inauguration of the service of the Sanctuary. (Cf. Diagram of Leviticus.) Spend what time you have remaining upon these chapters noting among other things: (1) The emphasis of strict obedience to directions given. Underline the expression, "*As the Lord commanded*"; (cf. Fourth Day, paragraph 8); (2) The fact that the priest offered for himself first of all. "It was a striking acknowledgement of the true character of the Levitical priesthood that the very first official act of the anointed priest should be to offer a sacrifice for his own sinful nature." Read Heb. 7:26-28; (3) The blessing of the people, possibly in the words of § 19, 6:24-26; (4) The testimony to the acceptance of the sacrifice, 9:24; (5) The solemn lesson of c. 10 gathered up in v. 3.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell."

"Let us have grace whereby we may offer service well pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire."

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 6: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

6th Day: § 18. LEGISLATION AT SINAI

"The saving work of Jesus Christ for man as a sinner,—that is what the Atonement means to us. I think it surpasses all explanations of it, just as life is more than biology."—*Henry Van Dyke*.

Perhaps the most important chapter in the book of Leviticus is the 16th, which gives an account of the Great Day of Atonement. We shall give this day to it. Read thoughtfully the chapter and compare the resulting impressions with the following explanations and scripture references.

We know that the mercy of God does nothing by halves. The spiritual restoration of the reconciled sinner is perfect before Him. Psalm 51:7; 103:12; Isa. 1:18. No symbol could so plainly set forth the completeness of Jehovah's acceptance of the penitent, as a Sin-offering in which a life was given up for the Altar, and yet a living being survived to carry away all sin and uncleanness. (Cf. Psa. 103:10-12; Isa. 53:6, 11, 12; Micah 7:19; John 1:29; Heb. 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24.)

"It would seem that the Day of Atonement was intended as an occasion for expressing more completely than could be done in the ordinary sacrifices the spiritual truth of Atonement with a fuller acknowledgment of the sinfulness and weakness of man and of the corruptible nature of all earthly things, even of those most solemnly consecrated and devoted to the service of God. It belonged to its observance especially to set forth, by the entrance of the high priest into the Holy Place, that Atonement could only be effected before the throne of Jehovah Himself (cf. Matt. 9:6; Mk. 2:7-10; Heb. 4:16); and by the goat sent into the wilderness, that the sins atoned for were not only forgiven, but carried wholly away. The rites were not in any proper sense supplemental, but were a solemn gathering up, as it were, of all other rites of atonement, so as to make them point more expressively to the revelation to come of God's gracious purpose to man in sending His Son to be delivered for our offences, and to rise again for our justification; to be our great High Priest forever, and to enter for us within the veil (Rom. 4:25; Heb. 6:20).

- PERSONAL THOUGHT: "With the Lord there is mercy,
And with Him is plenteous redemption."

Am I showing that I appreciate the completeness of God's redemption of me?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 6: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

7th Day: § 18. LEGISLATION AT SINAI

“The Lord reigneth; he is appalled with majesty;
Holiness becometh thine house
O Lord, for evermore.”—*Psalm 93*.

The portion for today is § 18, c. 17-26. Do not be disturbed because there is so much of it. There will be no attempt to examine it in detail. Referring to the Outline Study of the Book of Leviticus, in “RECORDS,” glance at what appears above the line of chapter numbers from 1-16, and read the words between the figures 17 and 26. The object for today should be by contact with the material under the influence of the Holy Spirit to come to a clearer apprehension of the necessity of holy living on the part of a child of God.

Read the sentence above the space on the Diagram in which are the figures 17-26, and look up the references there found.

Glance at 17:8-11, for the requirement to sacrifice in one place, and the prohibition to eat blood, with the reason.

What suggestion comes from 18:1-5 respecting the origin of the Hebrew laws? Did they spring from environment?

A glance at 18:6-23 (which treats of Unlawful Marriages, Unchastity and Molech worship) will suffice. You will wish to give a moment's thought to 18:24-30 for the side light which it throws on the extermination of the Canaanites (cf. 20:22, 23; § 2, 15:16).

Spend a few minutes on c. 19-22 (which contain a collection of miscellaneous laws regulating religious and moral behaviour, and regulations concerning priests and offerings), noting the frequency and connection of the word “*holy*,” and the expression, “*I am the Lord*.” You might underline these in your Bible. Read 20:24-26; 22:31-33.

C. 23 contains a calendar of sacred seasons, with directions for observance; c. 25 relates to the Sabbatical and Jubilee years, and c. 26 contains promises for obedience and warnings against disobedience. Extract such thought of these as your time will permit. Read 26:44,45.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: “Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord.” “Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” Am I living a clean life?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 7: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

1st Day: § 19. THE JOURNEYINGS OF ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

"Some Staffordshire colliers went to see the sights of London, and their surprise reached its height when one exclaimed: 'I say, Bill, they've got the same old moon here as we've got at Tipton!' The sights of London are still very wonderful and well worth seeing; but they've got the same old human nature there as they've got at Tipton and everywhere else under the sun."—*Ellen Fowler*.

Refer to Diagram X, OLD TESTAMENT RECORDS, for Outline Study of the Book of Numbers. Spend not more than three minutes upon this, reading over the titles in chapter spaces and also what is to be found in spaces A-M, omitting examination of references. Now read as directed under D, J, and K, of the Diagram. Afterwards under L, 1-5, read the New Testament passage in each instance first, and then spend only enough time on the chapter in Numbers to be able definitely and clearly to grasp the relation of the two.

We shall now consider the eight instances of murmuring found in Numbers.

First instance of murmuring. Read § 19 (Numbers), 11:1-3. Compare account of *first* murmuring after leaving Egypt, § 17, 15:22-25, noting the difference in treatment by God. What had occurred since then to account for this difference?

Second instance of murmuring. Rapidly read 11:4-35. In passing notice that the true meaning of vv. 31, 32 is that the quails flew near the ground and were thus easily caught by the people. Compare result of this murmuring (vv. 10, 33) with the result of the *second* murmuring after leaving Egypt, § 17, 16:3, 4, noting the difference in treatment by God. What had occurred since then to account for this?

Note God's treatment of Moses, notwithstanding his words in vv. 11, 12, 21, 22. But was the same spirit manifested by Moses as was in the people? (Cf. 1 Kings 19:4.) Is the following any explanation: "The meekness of Moses sank under vexation into despair"? Would such a manifestation as that described here likely have been attributed to Moses by tradition? But is it not perfectly true to nature?

* PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Cast that he hath given thee upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." (Psalm 55:22, R. V. margin.) Am I in the habit of doing this?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 7: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

2nd Day: § 19. THE JOURNEYINGS OF ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

"And they came to John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou hast borne witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it have been given him from heaven."—*John 3:26, 27.*

Continuing the study of the incidents connected with the second murmuring recorded in Numbers, decide what is the most prominent characteristic of Moses which appears in the Eldad-Medad incident, 11:27-29. If you were to name *Faith* as the leading characteristic of Abraham; *Persistence* as the most prominent trait of Jacob, and *Purity* as strikingly manifest in Joseph, what would you mention as that for which Moses was most distinguished?

Third instance of murmuring. Read 12:1-16. In connection with v. 7, read Hebrews 3:1-6. Is any man of the Old Testament so far as you know put by God in a more intimate relation to Himself than Moses is here placed? Dwell upon the real meaning of *meek* (v. 3) in the light of the career of Moses as known to you thus far. Is it so much *submissive, compliant, as, unselfish, disinterested?* What do you think the meaning of the word *meek* is in the statement of our Lord, "I am meek and lowly"? What trait of character is displayed by Aaron here? (Cf. his yielding to the influence of the people in the matter of the golden calf.)

Fourth instance of murmuring. Read c. 13, 14. Recall the revelation to Moses of the character of God at the bush (§ 15, 3:14, 15) as the powerful covenant-keeping Jehovah, and afterwards at the mount (§ 15, 34:6, 7) as the merciful Saviour, and re-read 14:13-19, noting how revelation is made the basis of intercession. This brings us face to face with one of the most important principles of prayer. Give a little time to meditation upon it.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "We know that if we ask anything according to his will he heareth us" (1 John 5:14). Am I accustomed to seek to know from God's Word whether the petitions which I present are according to His will?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 7: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

3rd Day: § 19. THE JOURNEYINGS OF ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

"Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: Whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in."—*Psa.* 32.

Glance over the instances of murmuring studied yesterday and the day before, and note that in every instance since the departure from Sinai there has been swift and severe punishment. Observe whether the same is true of those to follow.

Fifth instance of murmuring. Read rapidly 16:1-40, noting especially vv. 5, 7, 11, 22, 26, 28, 38. What characteristic of Moses would you say is most prominent here?

Sixth instance of murmuring. Read 16:41-50. What is this record showing us about the patience of God? Consider the witness to the choice of Aaron as priest, vv. 47, 48, and c. 17. Glance at 18:1-7.

Seventh instance of murmuring. Read 20:1-13. Note the words and action of Moses, vv. 10, 11 (cf. v. 8). These give evidence of violent irritation. "The faithful servant of God worn out by the reiterated perversities of the people, at last breaks down, and in the actual discharge of his duties as God's representative before Israel, acts unworthily of the great function entrusted to him." Read *Psa.* 106:32, 33.

Eighth instance of murmuring. Rapidly read 21:1-9, and compare John 3:14-16. There yet remains much that is interesting in the book of Numbers, but it cannot be here considered. Read *Psalms* 78, and 106 if time will permit, and seek opportunity to read the entire book of Numbers through at a single sitting. In it is a wonderful revelation of the patience of God, as well as of the perversity of the human heart.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "A generation that prepared not their heart aright,

And whose spirit was not steadfast with God."

- Shall I not entreat God to give me steadfastness of spirit? Am I imposing upon the patience of God?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 7: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

4th Day: § 20. THE WILDERNESS HYMN

"The worst trouble in the world is the trouble that does not know God. and so does not suffer. Without such knowledge there is no suffering. The sense of sin in the soul is the apprehension of Almighty God."

The impress of the weary wilderness is in every line of this 90th Psalm. The most fitting time to think of its composition is soon after the report of the spies. Read the poem following a division into three sections as follows: (1) vv. 1-6, in which *adoration* is prominent; (2) vv. 7-12, in which *confession* prevails; (3) vv. 13-17, which are full of *petition*.

The theme of this Psalm is "the frailty and brevity of human life, considered as a consequence of sin, and as a motive to repentance and obedience."

Read the Psalm again following an outline stated thus:

- I. The Eternity of God contrasted with the frailty of man.
- II. The reasons for man's transitoriness is his sin and the resulting displeasure of God.
- III. The request, that in spite of sin, God would bless His people.

The poem begins with the thought of home, and ends with the same (cf. § 20, (Deut.), 26:15).

Read v. 12 in the light of the following: "A concise expression of the principle that determines the severity of punishment. God's displeasure as expressed by penalty, is measured by His high claims to respect and obedience."—*Dewitt*. Think of the illustrations of this principle in the eight murmurings and their results recorded in the book of Numbers.

Note that the mention of God's work, v. 16, is followed by reference to man's work in v. 17. A consideration of the brevity of life leads to the idea of work at the close. This is not without respect to its relation to the future, as is evinced in the words, "Thy glory upon their children." Cf. 1 Cor. 15:58.

"Although more than 3000 years old this Psalm is not antiquated. It is read over the dust of some hundreds of the children of men every week in London alone."—*Peworne*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Have I given sufficient thought to rendering God the fear that is due Him?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 7: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

5th Day: § 21. FAREWELL ADDRESSES, SONG AND DEATH OF MOSES

It was a pious monk who said: "Whosoever seeketh an interpretation in this book shall get an answer from God; whosoever bringeth an interpretation to this book shall get an answer from the devil."

Have you ever read any book of the Bible through without interruption? You should do this often. It has been asserted, and is likely true, that forty-two of the sixty-six books of the Bible are so short that any one of them may be read through in less than half an hour. From a continuous reading of a book, results most valuable, and attainable in no other way, may be secured.

Only three days remain for the study of Moses as he is presented to us in the O. T. Much thought has been given to the question of how best to adjust the material to the time. It is hoped that the recommendation about to be given will be faithfully followed.

Give practically all the time allotted to your Bible study for this and the two succeeding days, to reading (aloud if possible) without interruption the book of Deuteronomy. It is wished for each one that a single period of time might be secured in which the entire book might be read. Read rapidly but do not hurry. Give all your mind to the thought presented.

Before beginning to read today, spend two minutes only upon Diagram XI., in "RECORDS," and then, as you read, do so with the thought of recording, when done, the most distinguishing characteristic of the material, and its most striking effect upon yourself. Probably without difficulty, you will be able today to read the First Address, the limits of which are 1:1-4:43.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "God is nigh whensoever we call upon him."
Deut. 4:7. Am I daily learning afresh the secret of the nearness of the Most High?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 7: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

6th Day: § 21. FAREWELL ADDRESSES, SONG AND DEATH OF MOSES

“Next to the birth and mission of Jesus Christ, the existence and institutions of the Hebrew people are the most important event in universal history. The founder of Judaism and the founder of Christianity are the two persons whose lives and labors have most extensively and powerfully influenced the progress and destiny of the human race. The truths which they revealed, the doctrines which they taught, have entered as the profoundest element into the civilization of mankind. While saving individuals, they have been the true power of nations, acting at once as the most vivifying and the most conservative principle in human affairs.

“The polity of Moses has a two-fold importance. It is important, first, from the perfection of wisdom, in which the work was accomplished; but still more important, secondly, from its consequences to the world. These consequences continue to this moment, and will continue through all coming time. Christianity itself sprang from the bosom of Judaism. Without the religion of Moses, the religion of Christ would never have been given to the world. It is, therefore, in a certain sense, undoubtedly true, that we owe to the Mosaic code the greater part of the light which we this day enjoy. Especially are we indebted to this code for a precious truth, which reason, left to itself, has never yet discovered; I mean the doctrine of the unity of God. By the possession of this truth a large portion of the human family have been happily rescued from the errors and immoralities to which the belief in many gods invariably leads.”—*Wines*, in Preface to “THE LAWS OF THE ANCIENT HEBREWS.”

Did you in yesterday's reading note the prominence of the truth referred to in the last sentence of the quotation made above?

Glance over the suggestions of yesterday about continuous reading and proceed today from the point where you left off yesterday.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: In my Bible study today has the intellectual been sufficiently prominent? Have I actually given my mind to it as I would do to mathematics or to language? Has the spiritual predominated over all?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 7: MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD

7th Day: § 21. FAREWELL ADDRESSES, SONG AND DEATH OF MOSES

"Inspiration apart, Moses possessed all those endowments and qualities which form the consummate statesman and chief magistrate: an intellect of the highest order; a perfect mastery of all the civil wisdom of the age; a penetrating, comprehensive and sagacious judgment; great promptness and energy in action; patriotism which neither ingratitude, ill treatment nor rebellion could quench, or even cool; a commanding and persuasive eloquence; a hearty love of truth; an incorruptible virtue; an entire freedom from selfish ambition; an invincible hatred of tyranny and injustice; a patient endurance of toil; a courageous contempt of danger; and a greatness of soul in which he has never been surpassed by the most admired heroes of ancient or modern times. Comprehensiveness, grasp, force, sagacity, were the predominant characteristics of his mind; magnanimity, disinterestedness, an enthusiastic devotion to liberty, and an ardent but rational piety, the leading qualities of his heart."—*Wines in COMMENTARIES ON THE LAWS OF THE ANCIENT HEBREWS*, p. 126.

The above is a remarkable summary. After reading today as suggested two days ago you will want to come back to this for a real perusal. Seek time to test the accuracy of this estimate of character by taking each statement, and with it before you, thinking through the story of Moses.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." Deut. 33:10. After all, what is the secret of true success in any life? Do I know God, or do I merely know about Him?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 8: JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

1st Day: § 22. PREPARATION FOR THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

"In the early part of my biblical studies some 30-35 years ago, when I first began the critical investigation of the Scriptures, doubts and difficulties started up on every side like the armed men whom Cadmus is fabled to have raised up. Time, patience, continued study, a better acquaintance with the original scriptural languages and the countries where the sacred books were written, have scattered to the winds nearly all these doubts. I meet, indeed, with difficulties still, which I cannot solve at once, with some, where even repeated efforts have not solved them. But I quiet myself by calling to mind that hosts of other difficulties, once apparently to me as formidable as these, have been removed, and have disappeared from the circle of my troubled vision. Why may I not hope, then, as to the difficulties which remain? Every year is now casting some new light on the Bible, and making plain some things which aforetime were either not understood or were misunderstood. Why may not my difficulties be reached by some future progressive increase of light?"—*Prof. Stuart* in CANON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Spend not more than two minutes on Diagram XII, O. T. RECORDS.

Read § 22, 1, noting the relation of: (1) Knowledge of and meditation upon God's law; (2) Courage; (3) Activity.

Read § 22, 2, noting especially vv. 10, 11, 24 (cf. § 19, 14:13). Think for a moment of the revelation of the true God which was being made beyond the bounds of Israel by all these events. Be looking for references to this in the future. Read James 2:25. But did Rahab work before she had faith? Read again § 22, 2:10, first clause. "Faith alone justifies, but not the faith which is alone." Read James 2:14, last clause (R. V).

Read § 22, 3:1-5:1. Note especially 3:3, 4; the object of the heap of stones, 4:21-24 (cf. § 2, 18:19; § 16, 12:26, 27; § 17, 13:14); the strategic effect of the movement, 5:1.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Thou shalt meditate therein.....that thou mayest observe to do." Is my Bible study practical?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 8: JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

2d Day: § 23. THE CENTRAL, SOUTHERN, AND NORTHERN CAMPAIGNS

"It was terrible surgery this; but it was surgery, and not murder: the excision of the cancer, that the healthy part might remain. The words of Carlyle touching Cromwell's work in Ireland, fit this case: 'An armed soldier, solemnly conscious to himself that he is the soldier of God the just,—a consciousness which it well befits all soldiers and all men to have always—armed soldier, terrible as death, relentless as doom; doing God's judgments on the enemies of God! It is a phenomenon not of joyful nature; no, but of awful, to be looked at with pious terror and awe.'"—*Moorehead*.

In reference to the extermination of the Canaanites, read § 2, 15:16; § 18 (Leviticus), 18:21-25, 27-30; 20:1-24; § 21 (Deut.) 12:29-32; and 20:10-18. Read also § 23 (Joshua) 2:9, 10; 9:1, 2, 9, 10; 11:1-5, and consider that opposition to Israel was really evidence of the most decided rejection of Jehovah in the face of unimpeachable evidence of His existence and superiority to idols. The nations were not destroyed without the most ample warning and long continued opportunity to avert the catastrophe.

Joshua's 'scheme of invasion was to drive his army suddenly, like a wedge, right into the middle of the country. By that movement he separated his enemies, prevented any too large combinations against him, and was enabled to take his foes in detail."

The account of the Central Campaign is found in § 23 (Joshua), 5:13-9:27; that of the Southern Campaign is found in 10:1-43; and that of the Northern Campaign is found in 11:1-12:24. The time left for study today will regulate your treatment of this material. You should seek to extract the thought, not missing such features as: (1) The emphasis of the work as God-imposed; (2) The recognition of a distinct supernatural element introduced, however, at crises only; (3) The promptness in action of Joshua; (4) The repeated encouragements to Joshua; (5) The solidarity of the Nation as indicated by the reason for the defeat at Ai; (6) The necessity of absolute obedience. Refer to a map for at least a general idea of the movements of Joshua.

- * **PERSONAL THOUGHT:** "As the Lord commanded....so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded." Would these words be true of the past twenty-four hours of my life? Am I determined to live so that they may be true of today?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 8: JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

3d Day: § 24. THE INHERITANCE OF THE TRIBES; LAST ACTS AND WORDS OF JOSHUA

In § 24 (Joshua), 13-21, is given an account of the distribution of the land among the tribes. You would do well at least to glance over it.

The last two chapters of Joshua should be read pretty carefully. After your own reading and noting on paper of two or three of the most striking features, compare the following: (1) The earnest solicitude of Joshua for the future of the people as indicated in his calling first the elders (23:1) and again not only the elders, but the people together (24:1) for counsel; (2) The emphasis in the first address (c. 23) of the fidelity of God as proved in the past in doing them good, and the argument from this that evil must ensue if they did wrong (v. 15); (3) The reference to the book of the law (23:6) and the covenant (23:16) and their emphasis of the requirement to keep from idols and to serve God only; (4) The marginal reading of 23:10; (5) The opportunity given (c. 24) to the people to choose to select Jehovah (cf. their election of Him at the mount when the Theocracy was established) or to prefer idols; (6) The method of Joshua in first recounting the goodness of God in the past, and then publicly casting his vote for Jehovah; (7) His testing of the people, vv. 19, 20; (8) The witness pillar and what was said when it was set up.

Take a moment to note the prominence, in the first part of Joshua, of the thought that not one thing should fail of all that God had spoken, and the emphasis of the same as a matter of experience in the latter part of the book.

Spend a moment on an estimate of the character of Joshua and the message of his life, as suggested by the first paragraph for today, and compare with the following: "Throughout he is the fearless soldier, the straightforward leader, the simple, unquestioning executor of the divine will." "Joshua sets before us the energy of faith which, grounding itself on the promise of God, and trusting Him, loyally addresses itself to the appointed task."

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "As for me and my house." Is my religion a service of God in sincerity and in truth, so that whatever others do, my allegiance and faithfulness will not waver?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 8: JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

4th Day: § 25. THE EARLIER JUDGES UNTIL GIDEON

"The story of the Judges is one in which the impression of wars and social chaos and 'evil in the sight of the Lord' and the retributions of His holy government predominates. There is much in the development, much in the character and doings of even the best of the men whom God raised up, which cannot be reconciled with the testimony of the Christian conscience. But we must recollect that the Christian conscience is an unfolding of those last days in which God has spoken in His Son. Chrysostom has remarked that one can get at the truth of an earlier time only by investigating 'the period, cause, motive, difference of person, and all the attendant circumstances'; and he has added with striking force that the highest merit of the Old Testament Scriptures is that we now see the defects of that time; that 'if they had not trained us so well that we have become susceptible of higher things, we should not now have seen their deficiency.'"—*Lang*, in MEN OF THE BIBLE.

Read Psalm 106:34-46 for a graphic description of the times of the Judges. Glance at Diagram XIII, OLD TESTAMENT RECORDS, reading Observation 8.

Refuse to be side-tracked by difficulties, and give today's time to § 25 (Judges), 1:1-5:31, after reading the following: The Introduction (1:1-3:6) is designed to prepare for the succeeding narrative "by explaining how it was that the heathen nations were still so powerful and the Israelites so destitute of divine aid." "Keep yourselves from idols" is the chief lesson of the history of the Judges. Ask yourself: Does the command given Israel to exterminate the nations appear the more justifiable when one takes into account the evil effects of Israel's failure to do so?

- **PERSONAL THOUGHT:** "Curse ye Meroz because they came not to the help of the Lord." Is there a call to me to undertake in behalf of God's cause to which I am today refusing to give heed?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 8: JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

5th Day: § 28. INTERNAL GLIMPSES OF THE TIMES OF THE JUDGES

"So prone are mortals to their own damnation, it seems as though a devil's use were gone."

Today sketch three stories of the age of the Judges, which reveal something of the manners and morals of the times. There is good reason for believing that the first two belong early in the period.

First Story. § 28 (Judges), 17, 18. Read 17:6; 18:1; and 18:31. Read 17:5, and then v. 13. Is there indication that Micah's conscience was not altogether clear about the worship in his house? Read the sentence which follows and then sketch the whole story rapidly with special reference to an estimate of the character of the Levite. "Want of maintenance, no less than conscience, draws him on to the danger of idolatrous patronage. When need meets with unconscionableness, all conditions are easily swallowed, of unlawful entrances, of wicked executions." Read 1 Kings 12:28-31.

Second Story. § 28 (Judges), c. 19-21. Read 21:25. As you sketch this narrative you will probably be impressed by the real unity of the nation even in that time of social chaos, and also by the power of the central ordinances of worship in the life and destinies of Israel.

Third Story. § 28 (the Book of Ruth). "For pathos, sweetness and unaffected naturalness it is unsurpassed." "The impression left on the mind by the two previous narratives is that which is naturally caused by records of unrest and anarchy. But, lest it might be supposed that all nobility and grace had vanished from the life of Israel, a short book expressly connected with 'the days when the Judges judged,' exhibits a series of pictures which show how much piety and simplicity of manner adorned even those rude days, how much was worth preserving because it had the possibility of higher things."

Rapidly, but with as much care as your time will permit, read the book of Ruth. Note especially 1:16, 17; 2:3, 12; and the genealogy in 4:18-22. "The glory of Israel culminated in the son of Jesse, and all that illustrated his ancestry was of paramount interest to the nation." Read Matthew 1:2-6. On the kinsman redeemer, read Deut. 25:5, 6; Leviticus 25:25-28, 47-50.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Her hap was to light on the portion of the field belonging to Boaz." "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Do I still believe in luck?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 8: JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

6th Day: § 26. GIDEON AND HIS SUCCESSORS

"And Jesus said unto him, If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth. Straightway the father of the child cried out, and said, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."—*Mark*.

Read § 26 (Judges), 6:1-10:5 rapidly but thoughtfully, without interruption, except to check striking thoughts with pencil in the margin. At once record that which has been most helpful to you. You might mention this in some letter which you write to a friend today.

"The most marked thing in Gideon is that he does believe and yet finds that he wants help to his faith. That state of mind God is always ready to meet. God has no signs for any man who wants help to doubt; and therefore our Lord Jesus scornfully refused the Pharisaic request for a sign."

"God always has something for the faith-strengthened man to do or to bear or to suffer. If God gives His good help, and makes men strong in faith, He will be sure to put to the test the faith which He has strengthened."

"Distinguish between the desire to be assured that he really had a promise from God, and doubts as to God's faithfulness or power to fulfil His promise. Of the latter there is not a trace in Gideon's character."

Read Hebrews 11:32.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Do I practice the principle that howsoever efficient my equipment for Christian work may be, I am nothing without God's effectual energizing?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 8: JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

7th Day: § 27. JEPHTHAH AND SAMSON

What is strength without a double share
Of wisdom? Vast, unwieldy, burthensome,
Proudly secure, yet liable to fall
By weakest subtleties, not made to rule
But to subserve where wisdom bears command.

—*Milton* in SAMSON AGONISTES.

Do not spend more than ten minutes on § 27 (Judges), 10:6-12:15. Record your strongest impression, and then read the sentence which follows here.

"How much more intelligent does Jephthah become when we remember that he was raised up from the half-civilized region of the Eastern tribes; in the wildness of his freebooting life, in the rashness and ignorance of his vow; in the savage vengeance which he exacted from the insolence of Ephraim—a Bedouin chief rather than an Israelitish judge."—*Stanley*, SINAI AND PALESTINE.

Read again the sentiment at the head of this page.

"The power of Samson lay in his impulsive practical joking—the man must be doing something odd. And this was just the ministry God wanted at that particular time... the immoralities are not revelations of the particular man. They are common to man; and in studying Samson the effort should be made to discover what was distinctive of him, the thing which was the weapon for his special ministry.... At a time when 'there was no more spirit in them' he made the people laugh. He turned the laugh against the Philistines. He showed the Philistine up in his stolidity, his blind idolatry, the cowardice behind all the bullying. He bade his brethren be of good cheer.... He is the man who 'served God in his generation' in the use of the gift of giant-like playfulness. Samson 'began to deliver Israel.' Let him do his preparatory work—it was the work of the hour—God will surely bring forth the men to follow on and complete the deliverance."—*Tuck*, in REVELATION BY CHARACTER.

In the light of the above give what time you have left to the story of Samson (§ 27, c. 13-16).

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "He wist not that the Lord was departed from him," but he found it out soon after. Is the Lord with me? On what condition will He be with and abide in me?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 9: SAMUEL, THE JUDGE AND PROPHET

1st Day: § 29. THE EARLY LIFE OF SAMUEL

‘Were I to mark down what might be called my chronological experience as a Bible reader, I should not hesitate to say that, up to this moment, my careful perusal of the Bible has increasingly confirmed my faith in its divine inspiration and authority. Without proceeding one page beyond the book of Ruth, I know of a surety that the preceding portions of the Bible are not the work of inventors, dreamers or impostors. The composition is too artless for a schemer, the history is too vivid for a dreamer, and the morality is too exacting for a libertine. My knowledge of the Bible increases my reverence for it in every respect.’—*Joseph Parker*.

Look up on a map the location of: (1) Ramathaim-Zophim, known also as Ramah, and later as Arimathœa; (2) Shiloh. Read Joshua 18:1.

Spend two or three minutes on Diagrams XIV, XV, in order to secure a general idea of the contents and arrangement of the books of Samuel.

Rapidly read § 29, (1 Sam.) 1:1-4:1a, checking such expressions and thoughts as you feel you would like to return to for further thought. Make a brief record of the results of your reading.

Did you find in the section any verse or expression suitable for memorizing? Would it not be well to carry out into each day from the Bible study hour some thought in the very words of the Scripture?

Where in the story of Hannah is there evidence of faith? Compare Hannah’s song with the “Magnificat,” Luke 1:46-55.

Glance over the material for the day for characteristics of Samuel as a child, such as obedience, honesty, etc. Note that he is an illustration of the fact that God has dealings with the young.

Read in order 2:18, 26; 3:7, 19-4:1a. What is a prophet? Was prediction the chief work of a prophet? What place did prediction have in the work of a prophet? Read Luke 24:27.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: “Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord.” But he knew about the Lord. Do I merely know about the Lord, or have I a personal acquaintance with Him?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 9: SAMUEL, THE JUDGE AND PROPHET

2d Day: § 30. INVASION OF THE PHILISTINES; JUDGMENT ON THE HOUSE OF ELI

§ 31. THE ARK OF GOD

§ 32. THE GATHERING AT MIZPAH; EBENEZER

"Thou must be true thyself
If thou the truth wouldst teach;
Thy soul must overflow if thou
Another's soul would reach."

"The signal downfall of the nation which took place in Samuel's day, —when the ark, the symbol of the people's unity, was captured by the Philistines, —prepared the way for a great change. Samuel became a judge in a different sense from his predecessors. He was not a mere warrior or hero raised up to put down a particular foe. He was the restorer of the whole land; one who brought the different parts of it into connection with each other, —who made them feel the blessings of a common organization, —the necessity and happiness of being subject to government, the misery of a condition of things in which each man did that which was right in his own eyes."—*Maurice* in PROPHETS AND KINGS.

Samuel stands a most conspicuous example of faith, patience, integrity, self-sacrifice and intercession. From now until the end of this Study, keep these five characteristics in mind and note on a slip of paper how they are emphasized.

Read § 32, 7:2-6. Note the marginal reading of v. 2. For answer to question in v. 3, see 2:17. Read also 7:4. On either side of this passage (7:2-6), is a record of a war between Israel and the Philistines. The work for today is to secure by rapid reading the facts about each, and to account for the defeat of Israel in one instance, and for her victory in the other. Read the passage at once. It includes §§ 30-32.

Did you notice how ineffective the ark of God was among the Israelites, and how effective it afterwards was among the Philistines? How do you account for this difference?

Read Jeremiah 6:9-14; Psalm 78:55-66.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Serve Him only and He will deliver you." Is this true of individuals as well as of nations? Does it help explain any bondage in my own life?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 9: SAMUEL, THE JUDGE AND PROPHET

3d Day: § 30. INVASION OF THE PHILISTINES; JUDGMENT ON THE HOUSE OF ELI

§ 31. THE ARK OF GOD

§ 32. THE GATHERING AT MIZPAH; EBENEZER

"Here on earth the influence of one who asks a favor for others depends entirely on his character, and the relationship he bears to him with whom he is interceding. It is what he is that gives weight to what he asks. It is no otherwise with God. Our power in prayer depends upon our life. Where our life is right we shall know how to pray so as to please God, and prayer will secure the answer. The man who is ready to risk all for God can count upon God to do all for him."—*Murray*.

The lesson of chapters 4 and 7 is so important that today will be given to it. In chapter 4 we see the result to Israel of being in the wrong place; in chapter 7 we see the result of being in the right place. Samuel here is a striking illustration of the large influence with men and with God which one may have who is right with God.

Read the chapters thoughtfully, checking what impresses you. Read again the opening sentence by Murray, and afterwards note what follows on this page.

Observe that in 4:3 the ark is spoken of as the deliverer, and that in 7:3 Samuel's words are: "Prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve Him only; and He will deliver you." You should not miss noting the effect of the presence of the ark in Philistia. "The glory which had departed from Israel, was vindicated in the darkness and solitude of the temple of Dagon."

Spend any time which you may have remaining, in reflection upon the character of Samuel as thus far revealed. Read again the sentence by Murray.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Can I look back to one or more definite experiences in which God's hand was signally manifested in response to prayer? Did I pause and devoutly acknowledge the help of God on such occasions? Is my present prayer life satisfactory? Do I prevail for others? Do people recognize me as an intercessor and when in trouble ask me to pray for them?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 9: SAMUEL, THE JUDGE AND PROPHET

4th Day: § 33. THE REQUEST OF THE PEOPLE FOR A KING

*"Think truly, and thy thoughts
Shall some soul's famine feed;
Speak truly, and each word of thine
Shall be a fruitful seed;
Live truly, and thy life shall be
A grand and noble creed."*

Thoughtfully read § 33 (c. 8), checking in the margin what impresses you.

Did you notice: (1) The expression twice used, "like all the nations"? (2) Did this consideration have greater weight with the people than the conduct of Samuel's sons? In order better to estimate the character of Samuel's sons read again v. 3, and dwell for a moment upon the type of man here described. Do you know of any who do the same today? What must follow toleration of political corruption?

Compare the plea of the people in c. 8 and the words "like all the nations" with Numbers 23:9, and Deut. 33:28, 29, where it is declared that the glory and happiness of Israel is to be their unlikeness to other nations in having the Lord for their King and Lawgiver.

Note the self-will of the people—their determination at all hazards to have a king and the fact that Samuel was directed to yield to their demand. Recall the scene at Mt. Sinai and note that the people there freely chose Jehovah to be their king. It might be well to glance over Exodus 19 and 24 to get this clearer. This is worthy of special note as it shows how in contrast with other nations of antiquity, in Israel, the people had a controlling voice in the election of their rulers.

Read v. 22. Why this dismissal? Read Deut. 17:14-20.

Recalling your thought about the functions of a prophet, test its accuracy by the part which Samuel is here in c. 8 represented as taking, and compare Ex. 7:1.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "That we also may be like all the nations." Does fear of being counted peculiar ever swerve me from the known path of rectitude? Shall I today yield to the temptation to do wrong on the plea that "they all do it"?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 9: SAMUEL, THE JUDGE AND PROPHET

5th Day: § 34. THE ANOINTING, ELECTION, AND ESTABLISHMENT OF SAUL AS KING

"Samuel belonged to a transition period. It was appointed to him to pilot the nation between two stages of its history; from a republic to a monarchy; from a condition of somewhat casual and indefinite arrangements to one of more systematic and orderly government. The great object of his life was to secure that this change should be made in the way most beneficial for the nation.

"Samuel was the last of the judges, and in a sense the first of the prophets. The last of the judges, but not a military judge; not ruling like Samson by physical strength, but by high spiritual qualities and prayer. In this respect his function as judge blended with his work as prophet. Samuel was the first of a succession of prophets whom God placed side by side with the kings and priests of Israel to supply that fresh moral and spiritual force which the prevailing worldliness of the one and formalism of the other rendered so necessary for the great ends for which Israel was chosen. With some fine exceptions, the kings and priests would have allowed the seed of Abraham to drift away from the whole purpose for which God had called them; conformity to the world in spirit if not in form was the prevailing tendency; the prophets were raised up to hold the nation firmly to the covenant, to vindicate the claims of the heavenly King, to thunder judgments against idolatry and all rebellion, and pour words of comfort into the hearts of all who were faithful to their God, and who looked for redemption in Israel."—*Blaisie*, in EXPOSITORS' BIBLE.

With care read § 34, c. 9, 10, looking specially for the revelation of character in Samuel which they give, and also for the evidence and method of the providential government of God in the world. Read 1 Cor. 13:4-7, and note how Samuel was an illustration of their truth.

Glance at Psalm 2, reading vv. 2 and 12. Now read again § 34, 10:1. Read Is. 9:6, 7, for a description of the government of the true Messiah.

Think for a moment what the occasion was for the various signs given to Samuel. After you have decided upon this, read 9:21.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "The thing displeased Samuel... and Samuel prayed unto the Lord." Do I pray when I am displeased? Is it a habit with me to resort to God in prayer when in any difficulty?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 9: SAMUEL, THE JUDGE AND PROPHET

6th Day: § 34. THE ANOINTING, ELECTION, AND ESTABLISHMENT OF SAUL AS KING

§ 35. SAMUEL'S FAREWELL

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways."

"The last representative of the old Judges, the first of the regular succession of Prophets, the inaugurator of the new monarchy, Samuel occupied the most trying of all positions, to stand between the Old and the New, and to mediate successfully between them. He lived from one age into another, and threw his full sympathy—most difficult of achievements—into the wants of both periods. His sublime figure stands out in the pages of Holy Writ as a signal example of Faith, of Patience, of Integrity, of Self-sacrifice, through a long and trying career, fulfilling the promise of those early days in Shiloh when 'he grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord, and also with men!'"—*Kirkpatrick*, in CAMBRIDGE BIBLE COMMENTARY.

For the occasion and fact of Saul's establishment on the throne, and Samuel's improvement of opportunity to do the work of the true prophet, read § 34, c. 11 and § 35, c. 12.

What estimate of Saul may one form from chs. 9-11?

Compare Samuel's warnings at Ramah (c. 8), and at Mizpah (c. 10), with those at Gilgal (c. 12). Why did he return to the same subject and enlarge upon it as he did? How on this last occasion did he give weight to the counsels which he pressed upon the people? Why did he make such explicit reference to his own past life? Does good advice depend for acceptance alone upon its intrinsic excellence?

Take a little time for quiet thought about Samuel as you have learned to know him. Have you any fault to find with him? What was his distinguishing trait of character? What was the secret of his influence? In what respects did he mold his age? Did his age much mold him? What most molded him? Who most molded him? How did he further the preparation of the world for Christ?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "As long as he liveth he is granted unto the Lord." These are the words of dedication of Samuel by his mother. His life shows how fully Samuel entered into the realization of the grant of his mother. Is my life fully and forever given to God?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 9: SAMUEL, THE JUDGE AND PROPHET

7th Day: GENERAL SUMMARY OF THE CHARACTER OF SAMUEL

Few historical characters are so worthy as Samuel of close study. Give your time today to thought about him as he is revealed in §§ 29-35.

Perhaps no better brief description of the career of Samuel could be given than in the words, "Patient continuance in well doing" (Rom. 2:7). Think through his life, aided when necessary by referring to the records, and test the adaptability of these words.

Refer to 2d Day, 3d paragraph, of this Study for recommendation, which it is hoped you have been following. Here review and revise what you have written down. You ought to have here the basis for an effective public address. Recall the meaning of the name Samuel and the reason for its choice (§ 29, 1:20). Is there any feature of Samuel's career more prominent than his prayer-life? Go through the record again with this in mind, noting the occasions, the objects, and the results of Samuel's prayers. Review again the two notable instances of intercession recorded in c. 7, 12.

Let your mind run over the history from Abraham to Samuel for instances of prayer in general and of intercession in particular. If time will permit, re-read the notable intercessions of Abraham and Moses (§ 2, 18; § 18, 32; § 19, 14).

In estimating the influences which entered into the formation of the character of Samuel, is any to be placed before that of his mother? If not pressed for time, review here the lesson on the method of the prayer of faith which is given in c. 1. First read vv. 10, 12, 19, 27. Read the following references and attempt to express in a word or two the thought of each as related to prayer, e. g., Real want, Definiteness, etc.: (1) vv. 2, 6, 7; (2) vv. 10, 11; (3) v. 11; (4) v. 12; (5) v. 13; (6) v. 18; (7) vv. 19, 20; (8) v. 20; (9) vv. 22, 24; (10) v. 27; (11) v. 28; (12) 2:1-10.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Prayer is not merely the cry of the suppliant for mercy; it is the highest forth-putting of his will by man, knowing himself to be of divine origin, created for and capable of being, in king-like liberty, the executor of the counsels of the Eternal."—*Murray*. Have I begun to know the secret of prevailing with God in prayer?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 10: SAUL, THE REJECTED OF THE LORD

1st Day: § 36. SAUL'S WARS WITH THE PHILISTINES

"I am glad to think
I am not bound to make the wrong go right,
But only to discover and to do,
With cheerful heart, the work that God appoints."—*Jean Ingelow.*

The central thought for today is the disobedience of Saul and its disastrous results.

Read § 36, (1 Sam.) 13:5-15. Re-read v. 8 and read § 34, (1 Sam.) 10:8. This command probably was repeated. Saul had been chosen by Jehovah to deliver Israel, but was not at liberty to begin the war until commissioned by Samuel. "It was really a test whereby should be proved whether the king was a theocratic ruler or a self-willed despot, whether he would take his directions from the co-ordinate authority of the inspired prophet, or be guided by his own will and caprice. The working of the two independent powers, the regal and the prophetic, was tried by the order in question."—*Deane.* Note that Samuel departed without any apparent protest on the part of Saul. What does this suggest as to the state of Saul's mind? As you proceed remember that Saul went warring against the Philistines at his own charges.

By rapid reading secure the general thought of (1 Sam.) 13:15-14:52, noting on a slip of paper any revelation of Saul's character therein found. Compare the result with the following paragraph.

Saul's characteristic impatience, and failure to wait on God, is seen in 14:19, 20. The same is manifest in 14:36 where the priest checks him. Read v. 36a and v. 46. The Philistines were not exterminated as Saul suggested. He at last fell on his own sword to escape their cruelty. This campaign was a failure in spite of Saul's best efforts. The victory in it was due to another who ventured in faith in God. Read 14:6. The rash oath which brought only disaster, suggests that Saul was desperate and growing in a determination to win in spite of Samuel's desertion.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Saul's emergency was great but he ought to have waited for Samuel. Does any emergency, however great, justify me in violating the will of God? Do I ever attempt, as Saul did, to go on and win in spite of conscious desertion by God? How essential to my daily living do I consider a conscience void of offense to be?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 10: SAUL, THE REJECTED OF THE LORD

2d Day: § 37. THE REJECTION OF SAUL

"We may never go back, but there is a point from which we may never go upward."

The lesson of the passage for today is perfectly plain. Read § 37, (1 Sam.) 15:1-35, making record of striking thoughts and impressions, being on guard not to miss the great central teaching summarized in v. 22. What was the point in Saul's life from which he could not go upward? Get vividly before you this interview between the consistent, faithful Samuel and the guilty, wavering, evasive Saul. It is a battle of giants.

The following is from *Note v.* of the Appendix of the Cambridge Bible on 1 Sam., by *Kirkpatrick*. Its bearing on today's text will be apparent: "The 'moral difficulty' of the exterminating wars of the Israelites is admirably treated by Prof. Mozley in his lectures on the Old Testament, entitled *Ruling Ideas in Early Ages*. (See especially Lectures IV. and X.) Such wars, involving the innocent along with the guilty in a common destruction, are incompatible not only with the law of love, but with the idea of justice taught by the gospel. How, it is asked, could they ever have been commanded by God? It is replied that God is the author of life and death, and that He has the right at any time to deprive any number of His creatures of life, whether by the natural instrumentality of pestilence or famine, or by the express employment of man as the instrument of destruction. This is Butler's defence in his *ANALOGY*, Part II, Ch. 3. This as an abstract defence is unquestionably true, nor can it be denied that as soon as a divine command to exterminate a whole people becomes known to another people, they have not only the right, but are under the strictest obligations to execute such a command. Mozley's *RULING IDEAS*, p. 84. To some minds such a command seems strange and perplexing, but it must be remembered that there are times when a signal demonstration of divine justice is needed for mankind in the interests of morality; that there are times when stern judgment is the truest mercy; and that the penalty of premature physical death is by no means the

Studies in Old Testament Characters

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STUDY 10: SAUL, THE REJECTED OF THE LORD

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most terrible fate which can overtake men even in this world. But the difficulty still remains, how a nation could be convinced that it was to be the executioner of God's judgments, and how it could execute them in so terrible a way without injury to its moral consciousness. The solution is to be found in the defective Oriental idea of justice. The destruction of a nation for the sin of its ancestors, or of a family for the offence of its head, was a common Oriental practice. It was not repugnant to the current sense of right. This indiscriminating kind of vengeance was due to the defective sense of human individuality, the want of a true perception of the rights and responsibilities of each man as an independent being. This feeling was, no doubt, shared by the Israelites. But with them such acts were expressly prohibited as a part of ordinary judicial procedure (Deut. 24 :16), and in this respect they were on a higher level than other Oriental nations. But when God saw fit by the mouth of a prophet who was recognized as His accredited messenger to enjoin the execution of such a sentence, there was no moral resistance to it. It could be accepted without hesitation as coming from God, and executed without any violation of their sense of justice. Such commands were an 'accommodation' to the moral and religious state of the nation to which they were given. Revelation is progressive, and God's dealings with the chosen people, while designed to raise and educate them, were necessarily conditioned by their moral state at any given period. It need hardly be said that such commands are inconceivable under the gospel dispensation."

Return in thought to the interview between Samuel and Saul before considering the Personal Thought.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Is my manner of life such that I am afraid to be confronted concerning it by a man of God? What wilfulness, or carelessness or self-seeking am I hiding from myself or others by punctiliousness in religious observance? Let me judge myself that I may not be judged.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 10: SAUL, THE REJECTED OF THE LORD

3d Day: § 38. THE ANOINTING, ADVANCEMENT, AND POPULARITY OF DAVID

“Investment by God with authority is the supreme test of character.”

Read § 38, (1 Sam.) 16:2, 14, 23; 18:8, 9. What light do these passages throw upon the character of Saul? Saul's eyeing David indicates that he recognized him as the successor to the throne of whom Samuel had spoken. There is no need to suppose that he knew that Samuel had anointed David.

Read § 36, (1 Sam.) 13:14, and be watching for characteristics in David which mark him as worthy of this description. Does this passage refer to characteristics or to a characteristic? If the latter is meant, what was it? Read Acts 13:22. Note the last clause. What was the most striking characteristic of Saul? What was the spirit of the people which demanded Saul? Were the people given a king after their own heart? What was the most striking characteristic of David's greater son? Read John 4:34; Heb. 10:5-7. Read Psalm 89:20a.

You have probably already noticed that today's passage contains an account of the second war of Saul with the Philistines. You will recall that he did not in the first war have his way in leaving not a man of them. Who gained the victory before? Whose is the glory now?

It were impossible, if desirable, to treat here many of the difficulties which may be suggested. For explanations, consult available Bible helps. But do not take the time of your morning devotional hour for this. Might not help on difficult points often be sought in interviews with Professors, Ministers and godly Christian acquaintances? The Cambridge Bible is recommended to any desiring to purchase a brief, valuable, cheap commentary on the books of Samuel. See this help *in loc.* for explanations of (1) 16:2b; (2) 16:14b, 23a; (3) the two accounts of David's introduction to court, etc.

Scan § 38, (1 Sam.) 16:1-18:9, as carefully as your time will allow, for the revelation of Saul's character there found. Record the results.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: “The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” In living is it my aim to please men or God? What place has the cultivation of my heart-life in my thought? How may I henceforth more rapidly advance in true soul culture?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 10: SAUL, THE REJECTED OF THE LORD

4th Day: § 39. SAUL'S EARLY ATTEMPTS ON DAVID'S LIFE

"Envy at other's good is evermore
Malignant poison sitting on the soul;
A double woe to him infected with it.
Of *inward* pain the heavy load he bears,
At sight of joy *without*, he ever mourns."

The section for today most strikingly contrasts Saul and Jonathan, his son and heir apparent to the throne, in their treatment of David, whom both recognized as the coming king. Read § 39, (1 Sam.) 20:13-17, 30-34.

In Saul's efforts to destroy David, we have a signal illustration of God's method of making the wrath of man to praise Him, and to work out His own wise purposes; *e. g.*, when Saul appointed David over a thousand it was in the hope of having him cut down in battle, but the result was a decided gain for David in the esteem of the people, and in discipline for the future. Be looking for other illustrations of this principle.

There is manifest in Saul a strange but natural conflict between the better impulses of his nature and the worse. Because of the former which prevailed in his saner moments, and on account of public opinion, he retained David in his service.

As you read today, note to what cowardly and treacherous hypocrisy Saul's jealousy reduced him. This day's study should lead to faithful self-examination to discover if this soul poison is within.

With the care which your time will permit, read § 39, (1 Sam.) 18:10-20:42, recording the most striking thoughts.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Do I recognize the fact that a man can receive nothing except it be given him of God? Do I envy anybody? Do I appreciate the greatness of the sin of envy and the danger one is in who is wrongly jealous? What are the roots of envy? What is God's way for one to win victory over envious and jealous thoughts?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 10: SAUL, THE REJECTED OF THE LORD

5th Day: § 40. DAVID'S LIFE AS AN EXILE

"Envy is the daughter of Pride, the author of Murder and Revenge, the perpetual tormentor of Virtue. Envy is the filthy slime of the soul; a venom, a poison, a quicksilver, which consumeth the flesh and drieth up the bones."—*Socrates*.

We shall examine the section for its revelation of Saul, returning to it later in our study of David. First of all read § 39, (1 Sam.) 18:9; 20:30, 31; § 40, (1 Sam.) 22:6-8; 23:16-18; 24:20, 21; 26:25.

From these passages it is perfectly clear that Saul was resisting the known will of God in fighting against David. Read again 24:20, 21, noting the words, "I know that thou shalt surely be king." Study Saul as contrasted with Jonathan in the following passages: § 39, (1 Sam.) 19:1-7; § 40, (1 Sam.) 23:16-18.

You have now the key to the situation. It will be necessary for you to pass over details as you read the portions indicated below for the light which they throw on the character of Saul. May this wrecked life be a real warning to every student of these pages. He fails who fights against God.

Spend the remainder of your time on chapters 21-24 and chapter 26 of the section. The following topics may aid in grasping the thought. Spend the greater part of the time on (3) and (4): (1) Saul's ruthless murder of the priests at Nob (c. 21, 22). Contrast his conduct in the war with Amalek; (2) The treachery of the Keilites, and of the Ziphites (c. 23); (3) Saul and David at Engedi (c. 24); (4) Saul and David in the wilderness of Ziph (c. 26).

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "The battle of life is the battle between self-will and God's will, and that man is placed under serious, and oftentimes hopeless, disability who fails to win the great victory over the self-will in the time of his youth."—*Robert Tuck*. Have I yet won this battle? How much real thought have I given to the secret of victory over self? In what particular is my will most prone to come into conflict with God's will? Am I on special guard there?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 10: SAUL, THE REJECTED OF THE LORD

6th Day: § 41. CLOSING SCENES OF SAUL'S LIFE

"Flecteri si nequeo superos, Acheronta morebo."—*Virgil*.
"If heaven bend not, I will stir hell beneath."

"It should be carefully noticed that the people came to Samuel after they had made up their minds. They did not consult him; they did not even ask for a king; they demanded one. It is of much significance that twice over their demanding is indicated. 'The thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us.' The people manifested the spirit of self-will, and the self-will of the people was punished by giving them a self-willed king. The supreme lesson of the age of Saul is the sin of self-will."—*Robert Tuck*.

Read § 21, (Deut.) 18:9-19. Note the contrast between the expressions in vv. 14, 15: "These nations hearken unto them, . . . unto Him shall ye hearken." Read Isaiah 8:19, 20.

Read § 37, (1 Sam.) 15:22, 23, and § 41, (1 Sam.) 28:3, 9. A comparison of these paragraphs will show that formerly Saul had made a vigorous campaign against witches. Knowing this, the words of Samuel in 15:22, 23 have new meaning. (Be sure you get it before passing on.) Consider in the light of Saul's former attitude toward wizards, how utterly abandoned he had become. Read 28:10. "Self-willed even in the depth of his despair, the king, abandoning hope in God, deliberately makes evil his good, and with his eyes open (for if Saul believed in the woman's power at all he must have believed it evil, v. 3) turns to hell for aid."—*Andrew Wood*.

Read 28:6, 7. Contrast his action here with that of 14:38, and note the evidence of the hardening process which lay between. To what straits has the noble Saul now come! Read 28:5. The scene is enough to make one weep. How terrible in its effect is sin tolerated in the heart! It will lead one to plunge knowingly into destruction.

Read c. 28.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "The Lord is departed from thee, and has become thine adversary . . . because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord." What effect has the study of the life of Saul had as a warning to me against disobedience to God? Read here the personal thought of yesterday.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 10: SAUL, THE REJECTED OF THE LORD

7th Day: § 41. CLOSING SCENES OF SAUL'S LIFE

"Except the Lord build the house
They labor in vain that build it:
Except the Lord keep the city,
The watchman waketh but in vain."—*Psalm 127:1.*

Read § 41, (1 Sam.) 28:25. "Of Saul's feelings at this momentous crisis we can judge only by his recorded actions. He showed no repentance, no softening of the heart at the predicted ruin of all his hopes; certain of death, he shrank not from the contest; 'in stolid desperation he went to meet his doom.'"—*Deane.*

Re-read 28:25b. Cf. John 13:30 and Augustine's comment. "Nox erat, et ipse qui exivit erat nox." (It was night, and he who went out was night.)

Read § 41, (1 Sam.) c. 31. Note the additions in the parallel account in 1 Chron. c. 10. Cf. § 34, (1 Sam.) 11:6-9.

Samples of Saul's repentances are found in § 37, (1 Sam.) 15:24; § 39, (1 Sam.) 19:6; § 40, (1 Sam.) 24:16, and § 40, (1 Sam.) 26:21. Discover from the context of each passage whether they were considered genuine. Did David trust his word? See especially in connection with the third passage above (24:22). Had David been deceived before?

As you read over the following list of traits of character, recall, when you may be able readily to do so, a circumstance in Saul's life illustrating each. Ask yourself which was the root evil. What is the difference between envy and jealousy? The list is: (1) Self-will; (2) Pride; (3) Envy; (4) Jealousy; (5) Fear; (6) Suspicion; (7) Cowardice; (8) Impatience; (9) Hypocrisy; (10) Deceit; (11) Disobedience.

Trace the cowardice of sin in Saul, and the distress at last into which sin brings one. See 17:11; 18:29; 28:5, 20; 31:4. Read Proverbs 1:24-30.

- PERSONAL THOUGHT:** Saul was rejected because he refused to obey God. The lesson of his awful failure is: "To obey is better than sacrifice." Let me think for a moment to what extent, if at all, I am making the fatal mistake of trying to make amends for failure to obey God by external, formal worship.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 11: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

1st Day: § 38. THE ANOINTING, ADVANCEMENT AND POPULARITY OF DAVID

"A biography should be read with an endeavor to find out what were the vital forces of the man, and what the leading principles that ruled and toned his conduct and relations. Find the one thing that most impresses you in every life, and that will suggest the message God meant to send by making, endowing and guiding that man."—*Tuck*.

The following outline should be memorized and often recalled as the life of David is studied:

- I. David until the death of Saul:
 1. His life as a Shepherd.
 2. His life as a Courtier.
 3. His life as an Exile.
- II. David's Reign over Judah at Hebron.
- III. David's Reign over all Israel at Jerusalem:
 1. Period of Prosperity.
 2. Period of Adversity.
 3. Period of a Measure of Tranquility.

Read the headings of Chapters I-XV in the Analytical Outline. Read the titles of sections under Chapters XII-XV.

For some early glimpses of David, read the following passages in § 38, (1 Sam.) 9:1,2; 16:6-13; 17:17-21; 17:32-37; 17:45-47; 18:1-5.

For a late glimpse of David, read § 70, (1 Kings) 2:1-4.

On the propriety of the title of this Study, read § 36, (1 Sam.) 13:13, 14; 1 Kings 11:4; Acts 13:22. In deciding what was chiefly in Samuel's thought when he used the words, "The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart," do not fail to observe that he was thinking of and speaking to Saul. Note what he regarded as Saul's great failure. Read again § 36, (1 Sam.) 13:13, 14.

If you have time, read the section for today and record impressions.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "The Lord seeth not as man seeth . . . the Lord looketh on the heart." How large a part does personal appearance, social position, or intellectual attainment have in my estimate of others? Is my judgment of myself and other men regulated by the true standard?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 11: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

2d Day: § 39. SAUL'S EARLY ATTEMPTS ON DAVID'S LIFE

"To act the part of a true friend requires more conscientious feeling than to fill with credit and complacency any other station or capacity in social life."—*Mrs. Ellis*.

For further early glimpses of David, read § 39, (1 Sam.) 18:12-16, 18.

The section contains four important interviews, in every one of which Jonathan appears. We study David today by studying chiefly his friend. The order and limits of these interviews are given below. As you read the passages, do not fail to give full weight to the fact that Jonathan was heir apparent to the throne. Was ever a friend so disinterested? (1) 1 Sam. 19:1-7; (2) 1 Sam. 20:1-23; (3) 1 Sam. 20:27-34; (4) 1 Sam. 20:41, 42.

"The name of Jonathan will remain forever as the perfect pattern of friendship."—*Kingsley*.

"The possibilities of noble and self-denying friendship lie in character. . . . It was religious rather than natural affinity which brought these young men into fellowship." . . . (Read here 1 Sam. 14:6 and 17:47.) "Such self-sacrificing love was only possible to two pious souls. . . . Friendship rises into its full dignity only when the strain of life brings stern testing times. . . . Through Jonathan comes to us this divine revelation: True friendship never hesitates at self-sacrifice, for it is of the very essence of friendship that each should love the other more than himself, and therefore should be ready to 'lay down his life for his friend.'"—*Tuck*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Jonathan gave place—he laid down his life for his friend. "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

• How does my life stand the test of my best friend's words: "Ye are my friends if ye do the things which I command you"?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 11: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

3d Day: § 40. DAVID'S LIFE AS AN EXILE

"God doth not need

Either man's work, nor His own gifts. Who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state
Is kingly; thousands at His bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest.
They also serve who only stand and wait."—*Milton*.

Read the following passages, which yield much in the way of revealing the real character of David. Think as you read of the expression, "A man after God's own heart." Record the results of your reading. § 40, (1 Sam.) 22:22, 23; 23:2-4, 9-12, 14, 16, 17; 24:3-15; 25:32, 33, 39; 26:7-11, 17-24. "This was the man after God's own heart, the man who thoroughly believed in God as a living and righteous Being; who in all changes of fortune clung to that conviction; who could act upon it, live upon it; who could give himself up to God to use him as He pleased; who could be little or great, popular or contemptible, just as God saw fit that he should be; who could walk on in darkness secure of nothing but this, that truth must prevail at last, and that he was sent into the world to live and die that it might prevail; who was certain that the triumph of the God of Heaven would be for the blessing of the most miserable outcasts upon earth."—*Maurice*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: How fully have I come to believe and to rest in the assurance that if I quietly and faithfully proceed to do my duty as it is made known to me, no one can prevent my coming to the place and doing the work which God has in His thought for me?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 11: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

4th Day: § 40. DAVID'S LIFE AS AN EXILE

§ 41. CLOSING SCENES OF SAUL'S LIFE

"We certainly should not shrink from describing David in the terms in which the Bible itself describes him. It sets before us broadly and without comment just the temptations which a man in such a position would be likely to fall into,—and leaves it to our conscience, enlightened by its own teaching, to say when he did or did not fall into them,—it takes still more pains to make us understand what the man himself was, the purpose of his being, the light by which he was guided. David in the cave of Adullam, amidst his wild, reckless companions, is essentially the same man as David in the sheepfolds, or David fighting the Philistine. He had not chosen his own circumstances, he had been thrown into them. He did not rebel against Saul. He did not deny his authority, or plot against his life even when he had cast him off. He had no home, and he was compelled to seek one where he could find it. I do not know where a better home could have been provided for him than among these men in distress, in debt, in discontent. If it behooved a ruler to know the heart of his subjects, their sorrows, their wrongs, their crimes; to know them and to sympathize with them; this was surely as precious a part of his schooling, as the solitude of his boyhood, or as any intercourse he had with easy men who had never faced the misery of the world, and had never any motive to quarrel with its laws."—*Maurice*.

With the suggestion of the above quotation in mind about the education of David which his years of exile life afforded him, read as far into §§ 40, 41 (1 Sam. 21:1-31:13; 1 Chron. 12:1-18; 10:1-14) as your time will permit, not forgetting to be on guard against judging David by standards of a more enlightened age than his own. In reading today you might pass over the portions read yesterday.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should escape into the land of the Philistines." 1 Sam. 27:1.

- Was this proper reasoning? Consider it in the light of former deliverances. How often is my reasoning like this?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 11: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

5th Day: § 42. PSALMS REFLECTING DAVID'S LIFE AS A SHEPHERD

"The finest poetry was first experience."—*Emerson*.

Read § 42, Psalm 8 (See RECORDS). Do not miss the point that here man's greatness in God's plan is brought out in contrast with his physical insignificance. This may be called The Midnight Hymn. "One thing seems clear: that even if this psalm were not written during David's shepherd life, it must, at least, have been written while the memory of that time was fresh in his heart, and before the bitter experiences of his later years had bowed and saddened his spirit."

Compare "Thy heavens, the work of thy fingers," Psal. 8, and "The firmament sheweth his handy-work." Psal. 19. Read Psalm 19, noting as you do so the progress of it from, (1) the external, vv. 1-6, to (2) the internal, vv. 7-10, to (3) a personal application, vv. 11-14. This Psalm (19) may be called The Sunrise Hymn.

"I do not suppose that the Twenty-third Psalm was written in the Psalmist's childhood; but it is at least a reminiscence of it, and brings vividly before us the scenes and feelings which his memory recalled when it was reverted to the golden morning of his youth."
—*Binnie*.

Compare "Restoring the soul," Psal. 19, and "He restoreth my soul," Psal. 23. Read Psal. 23, noting the marginal reading of v. 4, and allowing this to suggest the continuation of the figure of the shepherd and the flock. The figure of the host takes the place of that of the shepherd in the last two verses.

Read Psalm 29, which may be called The Thunderstorm Hymn. Delitzsch calls it the Psalm of the Seven Thunders. It begins with "Gloria in Excelsis," and ends with "Pax in Terris." The description is so vivid that the direction of the storm may be traced. Picture the shepherd receiving the impressions of this scene as he crouched with his sheep under some rock for shelter. There was evidently a rainbow after this storm as suggested by the words: "The Lord sat as king at the Flood."

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want":
(1) His constant presence; (2) His knowledge of my need; (3) His provision; (4) His guidance; (5) His protection. Think on these things. To what degree do I enjoy these blessings?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 11: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

6th Day: § 43. PSALMS REFLECTING DAVID'S EXPERIENCES AS AN EXILE

"The sweetest songs are those
Which tell of saddest thought."

"The passage from the visions of youth and the solitary resolves of early and uninterrupted piety to the naked realities of a wicked world, and the stern self-control of manly godliness, is ever painful and perilous. Thank God! it may be made clear gain, as it was by this young hero psalmist."—*Maclaren*.

As you read Psalms 7, 59, 56, and 34, David's experiences as an exile, note:

1. The imagery suggestive of wilderness and camp life.
2. The protestations of sincere innocence.
3. The frequent expression of calm trust in God and assurance of deliverance.

"'Come, ye children,' he says in a psalm which a reasonable tradition connects with this part of his life: 'Come, ye children, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that lusteth to live, and would fain see good days? Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips that they speak no guile. Eschew evil and do good, seek peace and ensue it. The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous: His ears are open to their cry.' This is no dull sermon of a man discoursing to wretched people against sins to which he has no mind. It is the honest, hearty, sympathetic voice of a captain speaking to a band, each one of whom he knows, telling of a right way which they may follow together, and of a wrong way into which he is as much in danger of straying as ourselves."—*Maurice*.

• **PERSONAL THOUGHT:** Meditate upon the statements in Psalm 34, in which the word *all* occurs, and ask yourself to what extent your experience corresponds to that of the psalmist.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 11: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

7th Day: § 43. PSALMS REFLECTING DAVID'S EXPERIENCES AS AN EXILE

"A man has only as much religion as he can command in the time of trouble."—*Andrew Fuller*.

Recall the circumstances which the superscription suggests and read Psalm 52. Note "I trust," "I will wait", vv. 8, 9.

"Not for himself alone was David led through such experiences. As face answereth to face in a glass, so doth the heart of believer to believer in religious experience; and these psalms are but like the speaking-tubes in the chamber of affliction, through which we may send up our cry to Him who is our helper."—*Maurice*.

Note the superscription and read Psalm 57. Observe the prevalence of petition at the beginning, and the predominance of praise at the close.

Psalm 142 is a gem. Read it thoughtfully. It is worthy a place on the list to be memorized as soon as possible.

"In desultory warfare, and in eluding the pursuit of Saul, against whom David never employed any weapon but flight, several years were passed. The effect of such life on his spiritual nature was to deepen his unconditional dependence on God; by the alternatives of heat and cold, fear and hope, danger and safety, to temper his soul and make it flexible, tough and bright as steel. It evolved the qualities of a leader of men; teaching him to command, and forbearance, promptitude and patience, valor and gentleness."—*Maclaren*.

Read Psalm 54. Read also Psalm 131 as perhaps summing up as well as in any way the results of the experiences of David up to the time of Saul's death. "Of all the brilliant company of gifted men who have risen from low rank to sit among the mighty it would be hard to point out one who could have sung the 131st Psalm with such perfect truth and fitness as the son of Jesse."—*Binnie*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Dwell upon the words of Psalm 131, "I have stilled and quieted my soul." What do they mean in the light of the figure? Have I recovered from the disappointment of not having my own poor little way, in the enjoyment of the larger life which God had in mind for me when He took child's food and toys away?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 12: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

1st Day: § 44. THE SONG OF THE BOW

Read Psalm 11. To what extent does it mirror any experiences of David up to the time of the death of Saul?

Recall the outline of the life of David given in Study 11, 1st Day. Read again the headings of chapters XII-XV, and the titles of §§ 38-71.

Review in thought the story of David as thus far followed and afterwards write: (1) A brief summary of the chief elements entering into his preparation for his life work; (2) Four commendable traits of character; (3) Any condemnable traits of character; (4) Any words or acts in order to form a just estimate of which it is especially important we should consider in the light of the times in which David lived.

Read § 44, (2 Sam.) 1:1-27. The story of the Amalekite was clearly a fabrication. This most pathetic of funeral odes is divided into two parts: vv. 19-24 laments the fall of Saul and Jonathan; vv. 25-27 commemorates the friendship of Jonathan and David. Note the strophical arrangement marked by the thrice used refrain which gives the keynote of the elegy, "How are the mighty fallen." Read § 38, (1 Sam.) 18:4; § 39, (1 Sam.) 20:20. Have we in the name of this elegy a reminiscence of the gift of the bow to David?

"Not only is there in David's lament no revengeful feeling at the death of his persecutor . . . but he dwells with unmixed love on the brighter recollections of the departed. He speaks only of the Saul of earlier times, the mighty conqueror, the delight of his people, the father of his beloved and faithful friend."—*Stanley*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Returning to the 11th Psalm, note how reason comes in to repel the insinuations of the tempter that the foundations were removed, and that there was no alternative but to flee. Faith is strengthened by the consideration that the Lord is trying the righteous. In what measure do I intelligently resist temptation?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 12: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

2d Day: § 45. THE RIVALS OF DAVID DEFEATED

"All things come round to him who will but wait."—*Longfellow*.

Read the 101st Psalm, and ask yourself as you proceed today whether the sentiments might have been those of the son of Jesse as he took the throne at Hebron.

By rapid reading grasp the main points of § 45, (2 Sam.) 2:1-4:12.

Review the section to see if you have noted: (1) David's delay for divine direction, 2:1; (2) The conciliatory message to the men of Jabesh-gilead, prompted probably by both policy and gratitude, 2:5-7; (3) The widespread knowledge that David had been chosen by God to be Saul's successor, 3:17, 18; (4) The vindictive unscrupulousness of Joab in slaying Abner, 3:27. Did jealous fear of Abner as a rival likely enter into the motive for this deed? (5) The political bearing of David's lamentation over Abner, 3:31, 35, 36, 37. But was it not sincere? See 3:28; (6) The revelation of character in David given in 4:9-11.

Recall the thought of Psalm 101, and read the following: "If David took this disordered, miserable country of his fathers into his hands,—not as a prize which he had won, but as a heavy and awful trust for which he had been prepared in the sheepfolds, which he could only administer while he remembered that the Lord was his Shepherd, and that He was the Shepherd of every Israelite and of every man on the earth,—then, however hopeless seemed the materials with which he had to work, and which he had to mould,—he might believe confidently that he should be in his own day the restorer of Israel, and the witness and prophet of the complete restoration of it and of mankind."—*Maurice*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Do I heartily approve and act in harmony with the *I wills* of Psalm 101?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 12: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

3d Day: § 46. DAVID ESTABLISHED AS KING OVER THE NATION
§ 47. CATALOGUE AND EXPLOITS OF DAVID'S MIGHTY MEN

"Unless we beware, the Word, which is meant to point us away to God, may actually intervene and hide Him from us. The mind may be occupied and interested and delighted at what it finds, and yet because this is more head knowledge than anything else, it may bring little good to us. If it does not lead us to wait on God, to glorify Him, to receive His grace and power for sweetening and sanctifying our lives, it becomes a hindrance instead of a help."—*Murray*.

While as a rule, direct reference to the Bible will be continued in the Studies where the text does not appear in the RECORDS, it is recommended that the Bible be kept lying on the open RECORDS so that there may be frequent glances at the arrangement of passages under each section. The student will by this means know when duplicate accounts appear. The advantage of this will be seen by reference to §§ 46, 47, 48.

Read § 46, (2 Sam.) 5:1-5, and the parallel passage, 1 Chron. 11:1-3. In reading did you notice the addition in the account in Chronicles? The combined account gives what reasons for the choice of David as King by the elders? Glance at § 46, (1 Chron.) 12:23-40, noting especially vv. 32, 38-40.

Spend a moment only on the account of the capture of Jerusalem, § 46, (1 Chron.) 11:4-9. Read § 25, (Judges) 1:21. A very short time will suffice for § 47, (2 Sam.) 23:8-39. The parallel passage adds nothing of importance. Read this (§ 47) for its light on David's character and management of men. The story of the Bethlehem well is the most interesting part. Note especially vv. 19, 23. Read Psalm 20. Dismissing all questions about authorship, or time of composition, ask yourself how accurately this Psalm describes David's trustfulness in God as you have come to know him.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Now I know that the Lord saveth." By what do I know this? What are the two or three clearest evidences that He has saved and does save me?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 12: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

4th Day: § 48. DAVID AND THE TYRIANS AND THE PHILISTINES
§ 49. REMOVAL OF THE ARK TO THE HOUSE OF OBED-
EDOM.

"Five minutes spent in the companionship of Christ every morning—ay, two minutes, if it is face to face and heart to heart, will change the whole day, and make every thought and feeling different."—*Drummond*.

Read the Samuel passages in § 48, noting what is said about David's reference of matters to the Lord. See second passage in Chronicles on statement in third passage in Samuel about Goliath. Look a second time at 2 Sam. 5:12. What two things did David perceive?

"The distinguishing peculiarity of David as a King was that he recognized in the most loyal manner the higher royalty of God, and regarded himself as a mere human vice-regent."—*Taylor*.

Read Psalm 30, thought by some to have been written for the occasion of the dedication of the home referred to in 2 Sam. 5:11, 12. What parts of it would be appropriate to the state of mind mentioned in v. 12 of this passage?

Read § 49, (1 Chron.) 13:1-14. Read § 19, (Numbers) 4:5, 15, 19, 20. What effect would this severe stroke upon the first violation of the law likely produce upon David and the people?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Let us have grace whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God, with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28). What is the tendency of the present time in the matter of reverent fear? In what measure have I yielded to this tendency? By what am I admonished to be on guard against a lack of reverence for God?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 12: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

5th Day: § 50. REMOVAL OF THE ARK TO JERUSALEM

§ 51. SONGS OF THE REMOVAL OF THE ARK

Saith an old divine: "Make me what thou wilt, Lord, and set me where thou wilt—anywhere where I may be serviceable. Let me be employed for thee, or laid aside for thee, exalted of thee, or trodden under foot for thee. I freely and heartily resign all to thy pleasure and disposal."

Read § 50, (2 Sam.) 6:12-23, noting especially v. 21. Read the parallel account in 1 Chron. 15:1-16:7, looking for any results of the death of Uzzah (see 15:2 ff., especially v. 13). Continue to read the remainder of the Section following the record as given in 1 Chron.

Read and meditate upon § 51.

"The unity of the nation does not stand in the walls of the capital city. When David had made this conquest from the Jebusites, and had set up his throne in it, he was impatient until he had brought the Ark of God there, and placed it, with songs and shoutings and dancings, on the holy hill. That Ark had been the witness to the people that they were one people, because they had the one God dwelling in the midst of them. It spoke to them of a permanent Being, of a righteous Being, always above His creatures, always desiring fellowship with them—a fellowship which they could only realize when seeking to be like Him. 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?' So spake David as he brought the Ark to its resting place. 'Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart.'"—*Maurice*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: How does my life stand the test of the fifteenth Psalm?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 12: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

6th Day: § 52. THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL DOMINION TO THE HOUSE OF DAVID

One characteristic of the Old Testament is that it has "a forward look, an air of anticipation of things yet to come. If the skeptic will not acknowledge prophecy, all the more he must acknowledge what in reality is every bit as wonderful, the power to forebode, as the bud forebodes the blossom and the fruit. If there were nothing else to divide the Old Testament from all other religious books, it possesses this one, this unique distinction, that it expects the New Testament, that it bears in its bosom the stirring of a life more august, more profound than its own life."

Turn to § 52, (2 Sam.) 7:1-29; 1 Chron. 17:1-27 in the RECORDS. Following the account as given by Samuel: (1) What of the sentiment underlying v. 2? (2) Notice in v. 3, and ff., the distinction made between the prophet's private opinion, and his message when instructed by God; (3) Do not miss the antithesis in vv. 5 and 11; (4) The reply of what New Testament personage to a message from heaven, does v. 25 remind one? Give thought to: (1) The content and significance of the message of the prophet, and (2) The manner in which the information was received by David. This humble, grateful prayer of faith here recorded, contains a revelation of David's character well worth studying.

Dismissing questions of authorship and date, glance at Psalms 2, 89, 110, for reduplications of the central thought found in today's Section.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that thou hast brought me thus far?" Pause a moment to answer this question. Then pass to think of the assurance for the future which you are justified in having. This should induce humble, grateful prayer as in David's case.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 12: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

7th Day: § 53. DAVID'S FOREIGN CONQUESTS

§ 54. DAVID'S GREAT HYMN OF THANKSGIVING

"You know how often Christ and His apostles in their epistles speak of hearing and not doing. If you accustom yourself to study the Bible without an earnest and very definite purpose to obey, you are getting hardened in disobedience. Never read God's will concerning you without honestly giving up yourself to do it at once, and asking grace to do so."—*Murray*.

A glance at § 53 (2 Sam. 8:1-18) will be sufficient. Key verses are 6, 11, 14, 15.

Give your time and thought to § 54 (Psalm 18). See RECORDS. "This Psalm throbs with the life blood of devotion." There is here a "continuous tide of unmingled praise." Before reading this Psalm continuously, note: (1) The substance of the Psalm might be expressed thus: I love thee, O Lord, because thou hast heard my prayer and hast granted me great deliverance, for which I will give thee thanks everywhere forever; (2) Name over and think of the significance of each of the figures in vv. 1, 2; (3) Read v. 16 after v. 6, observing that between these verses is a "description unsurpassed in sublimity and grandeur. Instead of pagan attempts at a likeness of God, we have here painted, with equal descriptive accuracy, poetic force and theological truth, the pitchy blackness which hides Him. . . . All this splendor flames out because a poor man prays, and all the upheaval of earth and the artillery of heaven have simply this end in view, that a poor man may be delivered. The paradox of prayer never found a more bold expression than in this triumphant utterance of the insignificant occasion for, and the equally insignificant result sought by the exercise of the energy of Omnipotence."—*Maclaren*.

Read now the Psalm without interruption, aloud if possible.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Thy condescension hath made me great" (Psa. 18:35 b). What meaning do these words convey to me? Am I able to say I believe I know something of the transforming influence of the love of God? Can I in reality use the first expression of this Psalm?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 13: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

- 1st Day: § 56. DAVID'S KINDNESS TO SAUL'S SON
§ 57. THE FAMINE AND THE EXECUTION OF SAUL'S SONS
§ 58. DAVID'S WARS WITH THE AMMONITES AND THEIR ALLIES

"What a chimera then is man! What a novelty, what a monster, what a chaos, what a subject of contradiction, what a prodigy! A judge of all things, feeble worm of the earth, depositary of the truth, *eloaca* of uncertainty and error, the glory and shame of the universe!"
—*Pascal*.

Read the sections for today, making such record of results as you may deem proper. It will be best to refer to the sections in the RECORDS for the order of the passages.

As one becomes better acquainted with the customs and laws of the times of David, there is less of surprise at the revolting parts of the account, and increasing wonder at the number of acts and words which were manifestly in advance of the age. But as we learn more of history and of our own heart, are we not constrained to cry: "How vain at best is man!" Truly the patience of God with our race and with us as individuals is infinite. When will His goodness lead us to repentance? When you have opportunity, read note II, p. 234, in the CAMBRIDGE BIBLE COM., on 2 Sam., where the execution of Saul's sons is considered; also Mozley's RULING IDEAS IN EARLY AGES, Lecture VIII., on the Law of Retaliation.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: We condemn foul crime in the ancients. Are we sure we have not the possibilities in us? If this darker self which is not very far from the surface in any one of us, gets the upper hand, to what lengths may it not run? A simple change of environment makes devils of apparently civilized men. Am I sure I am beyond that? Lord have mercy and preserve us from ourselves.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 13: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

2d Day: § 59. DAVID'S GREAT SIN AND HIS REPENTANCE

"I never wonder to see men wicked, but I often wonder to see them not ashamed."—*Dean Swift*.

Read § 59, (2 Sam.) 11:2–12:25, after thinking for a moment of three precursors to David's fall. They were Prosperity, Idleness, and Self-indulgence. As you read note the aggravations of his sin, and how one sin leads to another.

"It is one object of the Holy Scripture to paint sin in its true colors. No friendly flattery, no false modesty, draws a veil over this dark scene in David's life. It is recorded as a warning (1 Cor. 10:11, 12) that even holy men may yield to temptation and fall into gross sin; that one sin almost inevitably leads to others; that sin, even when repented of, brings punishment in its train."—*Kirkpatrick*.

"How can we presume of not sinning, or despair for sinning, when we find so great a saint thus fallen, thus risen."—*Bishop Hall*.

"Why should we dwell on the wretched story? Because it teaches us, as no other page in the history of God's church does, how the alchemy of Divine love can extract sweet perfumes of penitence and praise out of the filth of sin; and therefore, though we turn with loathing from David's sin, we have to bless God for the record of it, and for the lessons of hope that come from David's pardon."—*Maclaren*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Read 2 Sam. 12:5, 6. Here is rapid and bitter condemnation by a transgressor, of sin in another transgressor. How true to nature is this! Have I been trying to hide the light which would show me the foul spots in my own soul, by projecting these spots outside of myself, and pronouncing sentence upon them in another man? "Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst visit him!"

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 13: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

3d Day: § 60. PSALMS OF DAVID THE PENITENT

"Many make a mock at David's sin who say nothing of his repentance. It is enough for them to read in one place that he was the man after God's own heart, and in another that he committed these great sins, and forthwith they turn the battery of their scorn on the religion of the Bible. . . . What really is the distinction between the people of God and the wicked on the earth? Is it that the one class commit no sin, while the other fall into iniquity? No. The difference lies in this: that when the child of God falls into sin, he rises out of it and leaves it, and cries to God for pardon, purity and help; but when the ungodly man falls into sin, he continues it. It is a poor, shallow philosophy that sneers at such a history as this of David; it is worse: It is the very spirit of Satan, rejoicing, as it does, in the iniquity of others."—*Taylor*.

"Nobody buys a little passing pleasure in evil at so dear a rate, or keeps it for so short a time as a good man."—*Maclaren*.

Probably about a year passed between the crime and the confession. For David's experience during that time read § 60, Psalm 32:3, 4. What glimpses of this wretchedness does Psalm 51 furnish? Psalm 51 comes first in order of time. Read it for its profound views of sin, for its depth and fervor of penitence, and for the wideness of the mercy of God which it reveals. Read Ps. 32. The very gladness of it witnesses to the sadness of sin which had gone before.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Reflect upon the relation of the words, "And in whose spirit there is no guile" (Psa. 32:2b) to what precedes them in the Psalm. Does my belief that Christ died for my sins produce in me increasing hatred of sin and resistance to sin? If it does not, in my spirit there is guile, and my sin is not covered; my transgression is not forgiven.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 13: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

4th Day: § 61. DAVID'S FAMILY TROUBLES
§ 62. THE REBELLION OF ABSALOM

"Sorrow tracketh wrong as echo follows song. ' On! On! On! On!"

Recall the outline of the life of David given in Study 11, 1st Day. Spend a moment on the subjoined table taken from the Introduction to 2 Sam. in the CAMBRIDGE BIBLE COM. Dates are approximate.

Reign of David at Hebron	-	B. C. 1055-1048
Reign of David at Jerusalem	-	1048-1015
Period of foreign wars (2 Sam c. 8)		1045-1035
Adultery with Bath-sheba	-	1035
Amnon's outrage	- - -	1034
Absalom's rebellion	- - -	1023
Period of tranquility and growth		1023-1015
David's death	- - -	1015

Sections 61, 62, contain eight chapters (2 Sam. 13-20). Two will be reviewed each day for the next four days. Try from day to day to extract the thought without reading every word.

After reading § 61, (2 Sam.) 13:1-14:33, consider the following: (1) The curse of the clever but unprincipled friend; (2) The characteristic of human nature to hate one whom you have injured; (3) The manifest weakening of David's hands in dealing with his sons, owing to consciousness of his own guilt; (4) The probable incitement to evil in the sons by remembrance of their father's sins; (5) C. 13:39, and c. 14 are most likely to be interpreted in the light of the fact that political and judicial reasons stood in the way of the recall of Absalom; (6) Have you already discovered what an advantage Joab had over David owing to David's sins? (7) Would not Absalom justify himself for killing Amnon, and would not popular sympathy be with him? (8) Poor David! How his sin is finding him out! His suffering must have been intense. Surely the enemies of God did not let go the great occasion given them to blaspheme. (See Sam. 12:14.)

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." What am I sowing? Am I deceiving myself with the thought that because the evil effects of indulgence are not at once apparent, therefore the harvest will never come? Am I patient in well-doing, assured that in due season I shall reap if I faint not?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 13: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

5th Day: § 62. THE REBELLION OF ABSALOM

"Sorrow tracketh wrong
As echo follows song.
On! On! On! On!"

Read the third paragraph of yesterday about how to examine the chapters. Those for today are 2 Sam. 15, 16. Key verses for estimating the real David are: 13:21; 15:24, 25; 16:10, 11, 12. There is no single day of Jewish history of which so elaborate an account remains as that on which David fled from Absalom. (2 Sam. 15:16-17:22.) With 2 Sam. 16:1-4, compare 2 Sam. 19:24-30. Which man was the rascal?

"In one word, David is a man of faith and a man of prayer. . . . Faith, again, it is, to turn from David's highest to his lowest phase—faith in God it is which has made that 51st Psalm the model of all true penitence for evermore. Faith in God, in spite of his full consciousness that God is about to punish him bitterly for the rest of his life. Faith it is which gives to that Psalm its peculiarly simple, deliberate, manly tone, free from all exaggerated self-accusation, all cowardly cries of terror. He is crushed down, it is true. But crushed by what? David has discovered a forgiving God. This model of all truly penitent prayers—is that of a man who is to be punished, and is content to take his punishment, knowing that he deserves it, and far more besides."—*Kingsley*.

"David's great characteristic was faith in God, a deep and abiding realization of the unseen Lord and an entire dependence upon His guidance. It showed itself most living and most potent in his great repentance. It is seen also in his resignation under God's chastening hand, in his meek endurance of the punishment of his sin, in the humility which caused him to bear reproach and contumely as only a righteous retribution."—*Deane*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Mediate upon 1 Sam. 15:25, 26. Try to penetrate to the heart of the man who uttered these words, and to understand him. In spite of his sins, what is the effect of a comparison of his religion with mine? Does my faith hold me as high as David's did him?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 13: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

6th Day: § 62. THE REBELLION OF ABSALOM

"Sorrow tracketh wrong
As echo follows song.
On! On! On! On!"

Read § 62, (2 Sam.) c. 17, 18, and as you do so, try to divine David's thoughts during those days he was crushed in spirit, humiliated before his people, and degraded in his own estimation. Think with him his thoughts in the night watches and be instructed against sin.

"Faults! the greatest of faults, I should say, is to be conscious of none. Readers of the Bible, above all, one would think, might know better. Who is called there the man according to God's own heart? David, the Hebrew king, had fallen into sins enough; blackest crimes; there was no want of sins. And thereupon unbelievers sneer and ask, "Is this your man according to God's heart?" The sneer, I must say, seems to me but a shallow one. What are faults? What are the outward details of a life, if the inner secret of it—the remorse, temptations, true, often-baffled, never-ending struggle of it—be forgotten? Of all acts, is not, for a man, repentance most divine? The deadliest sin, I say, were that same supercilious consciousness of no sin. That is death. The heart so conscious is divorced from sincerity, humility, and in fact—is dead. David's life and history I consider to be the truest emblem ever given of a man's moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will ever discern in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul toward what is good and best. Struggle often baffled sore, baffled down into entire wreck, yet a struggle never ended; ever with tears, repentance, true, unconquerable, purpose begun anew. That a man's struggle be a faithful, unconquerable one, that is the question of questions."—*Carlyle*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: The last sentence of the quotation above may well be used to test my life. How faithful, how unconquerable has been my fight? Is it possible that I am saying, There is no hope of victory? If so, it is because I have not been faithful. I have been regarding sin in my heart. "Renew a steadfast spirit within me, O God."

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 13: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

7th Day: § 63. SOME PSALMS WHICH REFLECT EXPERIENCE OF DAVID'S LATER LIFE

"In our religion we want nothing so much as more of God. Under heaven there is no way of getting this but by close personal communion. Do not be content in your morning watch with anything less than seeing the face of God, having the assurance that He is looking on you in love, and listening and working in you."—*Murray*.

You will recall characteristics of Psalms of the Exile life (see Study 11, 6th day). The Psalms which most likely reflect the experience of the times of Absalom's rebellion both resemble and differ from these. Their resemblance consists chiefly in their expression of confidence in God. In these later Psalms there is prominent: (1) Absence of assertion of innocence; (2) Submission to the will of God; (3) Assertion of trustfulness in God in spite of everything; (4) Much of prayer.

Read Psalm 143, which on account of its prevailing tone of despondency and Septuagint superscription has been thought by many to belong to the period in mind.

Judge of the propriety of the following statements, as you read the Psalms indicated: "Psalm 63 was probably written between the flight from Jerusalem and the passage of the Jordan. Psa. 3 is a morning hymn, and Psa. 4 an evening hymn composed on the day following that on which he quitted Jerusalem. Psa. 26 and possibly Psa. 62 refer to the traitors who had deserted him at this crisis; 27 and 28 probably describe his feelings during his exile at Mahanaim."—*Kirkpatrick*.

It might be well for you, in any moments which remain, to dismiss all thoughts about date and authorship, and to look into one or two of these Psalms as a reflector of human experience—as the record of a soul's utterance before God.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: What a God these Psalms reveal! One to whom one may go in his distress. One to converse with whom but for a moment, renews the strength. One before whom the heart may be laid open with assurance that no confidences shall be betrayed. "As for me, I will call upon God. My hope is in Thee."

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STUDY 14: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

1st Day: §64. THE CENSUS AND THE PLAGUE

"Don't let your doubts trouble you too much; and don't feel that you've got to resolve them all. Often the best thing you can do with your doubts is to hang them up to dry. Then, when a good time comes, you can take them down again to look at. In many cases you'll find that somehow they've settled themselves; they are no longer doubts."
—*Bushnell.*

These words of Bushnell about doubts have an application to certain difficulties connected with today's section. You may or you may not be satisfied with explanations which are given in various commentaries and lives of David. Make yourself acquainted with these as you have opportunity. Do not prejudge, is the one caution here given. Until you are sure that all the evidence is in, wait.

After reading the passage in Samuel (2 Sam. 24), see if a comparison of the account in Chronicles sheds any light on the situation. Grasp and keep where they belong, such central thoughts as: (1) David charged himself, not God, with foolishness and sin. Even Joab anticipated trouble, but David insisted; (2) The sin when recognized was confessed; (3) While the account does not exculpate Israel, David takes all the blame to himself; (4) David's large experience with both man and God led him to believe the divine compassion to be greater than that of man; (5) The grace of God in staying the plague, and in providing for the expiation of the sin.

Dwell upon the revelation of character in David which the following passages give: 2 Sam. 24:10, 14, 17, 24.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (Jer. 17:5). How much thought do I give to avoidance of the perilous way here pointed out?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 14: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

2d Day: § 65. DAVID'S PREPARATION FOR THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

A prayer—"O God, who hast commanded us to be perfect, as Thou our Father in heaven art perfect: put into our hearts, we pray Thee, a continual desire to obey Thy holy will. Teach us day by day what Thou wouldst have us to do, and give us grace and power to fulfil the same. May we never, from love of ease, decline the path which Thou pointest out, nor, for fear of shame, turn away from it. Amen."

Give a few minutes to Diagram XVI. (See RECORDS.) One of the great differences between the accounts about David in Samuel and Chronicles is, that in Samuel David the man is prominent, while in Chronicles the theocratic ruler establishing Jehovah's worship is emphasized. You will not fail to observe the prominence given in Chronicles to the Ark and the Temple with the arrangements for worship. When were the Chronicles compiled, and for what purpose?

The limits of § 65 are 1 Chron. 21:28-22:19. In connection with 21:29-22:1, read 1 Chron. 16:39, 40; 2 Chron. 1:3-5; 3:1.

What led David to the conclusion announced in 1 Chron. 22:1? Read c. 22:2-19 for its revelation of David's character. In connection with v. 7 ff., refer to § 52 (2 Sam. 7 or 1 Chron. 17).

With David's words to Solomon, v. 13, compare Deut. 31:6, 7, and Joshua 1:6, 7.

The great ambition of David's life was to build a house for the Lord. The spirit in which he abandoned the project is most commendable. A most instructive contrast is traceable between Saul and David in their treatment of the messages of God sent to them by men. David invariably followed instructions. His life's motto was: "I come to do thy will, O my God." Do you say he failed? He did not fail, as a rule. It was in his heart to obey God. Such was not Saul's purpose. Read § 40, (1 Sam.) 22:5; § 45, (2 Sam.) 2:1; § 52, (2 Sam.) 7:4 ff.; § 59, (2 Sam.) 12:13; § 64, (2 Sam.) 24:12 ff.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: As I review my past, how continuously have I responded without hesitation to the will of God as made known to me? Am I able to recall any instances when I have been rebuked by God's message? How did I act then? Did I confess and turn from sin, or did I resent or ignore the message?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 14: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

3d Day: § 66. OTHER PSALMS ASCRIBED TO DAVID

"There is still a good deal of obscurity, and consequent difference of opinion on several points necessary to be determined before the precise number of the Psalms contributed by David can be ascertained. . . . Meanwhile the approximate estimate is sufficient to show that the reign of David was, beyond all controversy, the Augustan age of sacred psalmody."—*Binnie*.

"The force of David's character was vast, and the scope of his life was immense. His harp was full-stringed, and every angel of joy and of sorrow swept over the chords as he passed; but the melody always breathed of heaven. And such oceans of affection lay within his breast as could not always slumber in their calmness. For the hearts of a hundred men strove and struggled together within the narrow continent of his single heart."—*Edward Irving*.

A glance at the list of other Psalms ascribed to David (§ 66) will indicate that half of them are before the fortieth. You are doubtless familiar with the division of the Psalter into five books. Spend three minutes on the superscriptions of the Psalms which constitute the first book (1-42). No author except David is mentioned.

We shall assume in these Studies that the superscriptions are correct, reserving the right to judge as we read each Psalm whether it is likely David wrote it, and if so, when in his life he did write it. We should, however, be on double guard, not to allow questions of date and authorship to monopolize our time for feeding the soul. After all, the messages of these Psalms are remarkably independent of time and author.

Remembering that the words are records of a soul's utterance before God, read Psalms 5, 6 and 9, noting how many of the sentiments you can breathe out heartily to your God. Offer as your prayer as much of these Psalms as appears appropriate. Linger on the portions which most strikingly express what you feel you would like to say to God.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: The Psalmists did not complain about God, but they did not hesitate to tell Him their troubles, and to call upon Him for help. What conception of God is one led to believe the writer of the 5th Psalm to have had? Does it differ from our best conception of God?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 14: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

4th Day: § 67. DAVID AS AN ORGANIZER

"It is one thing to ask God to help us in our plans; it is quite another thing to ask God how we can be helpers in His plans. Every man is glad to have God's help; only now and then is a man found whose first thought is how he can help God. What is your chief desire in your morning prayer for the day? Your honest answer to that question may reveal to you your spirit and purpose in life."—*Trumbull*.

Do not think of reading the section (§ 67) as a whole, the limits of which are 1 Chron. 23:1-27:34. In a very few minutes you should be able to gather from certain key verses some very definite ideas about the organization of religious, civil and military affairs under David. See, now, what you can do in five minutes.

"What Moses had commenced, and Joshua had for a time and in part completed, what Samuel had lived but to accomplish, and had but half realized, was established first on a permanent basis by David. He gave to his nation that unity which made combination for national good practicable. . . . His piety was thoroughly practical, and he aimed at making the whole nation of one mind with himself in this important matter. He elaborated a grand system of worship, and secured the regular and decent performance of divine service. . . . David showed remarkable ability in organizing."—*Deane*.

Read Psalm 13, noting how soon the suppliant passes from the deep valley to the mountain top. Account for this.

Read Psalm 16. Note the use made of it in Acts c. 2. What is your choice of verses?

Read Psalm 17. Of several choice parts, do not miss the contrast in vv. 14, 15, suggested by the words, "They are satisfied—I shall be satisfied."

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Re-read the words of Trumbull above and answer the question asked. As you meditate upon this let your eye rest upon the first verse of Psalm 17.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 14: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

5th Day: § 68. SOLOMON CHOSEN TO BE DAVID'S SUCCESSOR
§ 70. DAVID'S LAST CHARGE TO SOLOMON

"A short special communion with the Unseen and Eternal prevents the soul from ever being again so completely the slave of the things of sense and time."—*Brooks*.

Read §§ 68, 70 (1 Kings) 1:1-2:11. Consider David's advice to Solomon about Joab and Shimei in the light of 1 Kings 1:7; 2:22, 27, 28, 36, 37, 38, 42-46. Is one justified in concluding at once, that David's advice to Solomon was in satisfaction of private rancor, and was actuated by personal resentment? Were not these two men foul plotters against the stability of Solomon's rule, and was it not with the public weal in mind that David thus advised his son?

Refresh your mind on the relations of David and Joab by glancing over 2 Sam. 2:13-32; 3:22-31; 10:7-14; 11:17-25.

"We have seen that the life of David is the life neither of a mere official, fulfilling a purpose in which he has no interest, nor of a hero without fear and without reproach; but of a man inspired by a divine purpose, under the guidance of a divine teacher, liable to all ordinary errors, as likely as any of us to fall into great sins. The interest we feel in him is strong and personal. It is not won from us by a single exaggeration of his merits—by the least attempt to surround him with some unnatural halo of glory. We should have wished, perhaps, to see his sun set with peculiar splendor; to be told of some great acts, or to hear some noble words, which would assure us that he died a saint. The Bible does not in the least gratify this expectation. It represents him in the bodily feebleness, in something like the dotage of old age. The last sentences which are reported of him concern the after-administration of his son's kingdom, and the punishment of some of his mischievous subjects. Of all his words, they are perhaps those which we least care to remember. . . . Not by momentary flashes does God bid us judge of our fellow-creatures; for He who reads the heart and sees the meaning and purpose of it, judges not of them by these."—*Maurice*.

• **PERSONAL THOUGHT:** "Be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man." What is it to shew one's self a man, and how may I be strong in the truest sense?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 14: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

6th Day: § 69: DAVID'S CHARGE ABOUT THE TEMPLE; THE OFFERINGS AND THE PRAYER

"Our reverent feeling toward God is always in danger of setting Him afar off, as if He did not care for and had little to do with these lives that He has made."—*Brooks*.

The section for today is rich in its revelation of David's character, and of the nature of God and His relation to character. As you read § 69, (1 Chron.) 28:1-29:5, you will not fail to get vividly before you the picture of the aged king advising his young son and the people over whom he was to rule in the hearing of each other. Note the emphasis which he puts upon true sincerity of heart. Observe how he seizes the opportunity for securing large contributions to the Temple fund, and himself sets an example of liberality. Give special attention to David's prayer, which is the core of the section.

"It was David's supreme peculiarity that he was sensitive to the presence of God, to the thought of God, to the working of God. . . . David learned in early life heart-rest in God. And this was the dominating force of his life. This gave him his uniqueness, his individuality. Here was a man to whom God was a living, bright reality. Wherever he was, he was with God. Into whatever company he went he carried the suggestion of God. Back of David men could always find God. . . . So it may be said that David's life-power lay in his personal piety. His character—his religious character—his strong sense of God and of God's direct relations to everything that concerned him—these give the revelation which was carried in the person of David to all the generations. It is plain that early piety may be expected to unfold into a life of steadfast good. This man was a man after God's own heart because he was a child after God's own heart, an open-souled child, to whom the sense of God would come, could enter in, could do its transforming work."—*Tuck*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: How real to me, and how constant is a sense of the presence of God? How may I cultivate this sense? What are the advantages of this sense?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 14: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

7th Day: § 71. THE LAST WORDS OF DAVID

"The hearts of men are their books; events are their tutors; great actions are their eloquence."—*Macaulay*.

Read § 71, (2 Sam.) 23:1-7. Note: (1) What is said of David; (2) What of his rule; (3) The figure used to represent the results of this rule. Think into the full force of this in the light of the rainy season in Palestine; (4) Consider whether the portrait here drawn looks forward to an ideal ruler; (5) Give heed to the marginal readings.

Read Psalm 132. Whenever, and by whomsoever written, did not the author enter in reality into the spirit and aspirations of the true David as we have been learning to know him?

Read § 71, (1 Chron.) 29:26-30. Recall the occasion on which Nathan is mentioned in the history of David; also that with which Gad was associated. Dwell for a moment once more on the uniformity of David's disposition to heed the prophetic voice.

Look again at 1 Sam. 13:14, and its immediate context, and read the following: "When Samuel, speaking of David, said that he was a man after God's own heart, he did not mean that he was a man sinlessly perfect, but that he was a man who would go right where Saul had gone wrong; a man who would regard himself not as supreme in the state, but as God's viceroy there, and in the government of the people would aim at fulfilling not his own will, but the will of God."—*Macgregor*.

Read the following very slowly and note to what extent you approve the estimate here given: "Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the life of David is its romantic variety of circumstances. None of the great men of scripture touched human life at so many points. His character also was singularly full and versatile. David is like his own harp of many chords, through which the breath of God murmured, drawing forth wailing and rejoicing, the clear ring of triumphant trust, the low plaint of penitence, the blended harmonies of all devout emotions. The man had faults—grave enough. Let it be remembered that no one has judged them more rigorously than himself. . . . That union of the soldier and the poet gives the life a peculiar charm. . . . We see the true poetic temperament, with all its capacities for keenest delight and sharpest agony, with its tremulous

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 14: DAVID, THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

7th Day: § 71. THE LAST WORDS OF DAVID

mobility, its openness to every impression, its gaze of childlike wonder, and eager welcome to whatsoever things are lovely, its simplicity and self-forgetfulness, its yearnings 'after worlds half realized,' its hunger for love, its pity and its tears. He was made to be the inspired poet of the religious affections.

"And on the other side, we see the greatest qualities of a military leader of the antique type. . . . Sagacious, full of resource, prudent in counsel, and swift as lightning in act; frank and generous, bold and gentle, cheery in defeat, calm in peril, patient in privations and ready to share them with his men, modest and self-restrained in victory, chivalrous to his foes, ever watchful, ever hopeful—a born leader and king of men.

"The basis of all was a profound, joyous trust in his Shepherd God, an ardor of personal love to Him, such as had never before been expressed, if it had ever found place in Israel. That trust 'opened his mouth to show forth' God's praise, and strengthened his 'fingers to fight.' He has told us himself what was his habitual temper, and how it was sustained: 'I have set the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth.'"—*Maclaren*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "The Lord is my shepherd." The Oriental shepherd knows his sheep; is the constant companion of his sheep; leads, protects, and provides for his sheep. "Lo, this God is our God, He will be our guide even unto death." How fully do I take this in? Can I not go out into this day with new strength because of a clearer grasp of this greatest of truths?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 15: SOLOMON, THE SON OF DAVID

1st Day: § 72. SOLOMON ESTABLISHED UPON THE THRONE OF DAVID
§ 73. THE IDEAL KING

"After all, the principal work in life for any man, whatever his calling or profession, is in bringing men to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I would have every young man who is pursuing a liberal education, bear in mind that it is not through scholarship that this work is to be done. In my opinion, the best specific preparation for this, the great work of every Christian's life, is a thorough mastery of the English Bible from Genesis to Revelation."—*Principal Coy.*

Read § 72, (1 Kings) 2:12-46, noting the fact that the request of Adonijah, according to the customs of those days, would be understood as a reassertion of his claims to the throne. Interpret David's last words to Solomon, § 71, (1 Kings) 2:5-9, in the light of this record.

Spend a little time thinking out and estimating the influences brought to bear upon Solomon up to the time of his coronation. Psalm 72 sets forth the kingly office more fully and more ideally than any other Old Testament passage. It is traditionally ascribed to this period when the national development reached its height.

Read the Psalm, asking yourself whether it might be an expression of David's wish for his son. Consider the universality, the beneficence, and the permanence of the reign here described. Solomon did not fulfil the hope of this prayer. Does not one feel instinctively that a greater than Solomon is here? Did not Solomon at his best serve as a suggestion of David's greater Son?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: What measure of assurance do I possess that the ideal described in the 72d Psalm shall one day be realized? How much is my life stimulated and directed by the vision of this world ruled in righteousness by Jesus Christ?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 15: SOLOMON, THE SON OF DAVID

2d Day: § 74: THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

"To know
That which before us lies in daily life,
Is the prime wisdom."—*Milton*.

Read § 74, (1 Kings) 3:1-28, making a record of such thoughts as impress you. Merely glance at vv. 1-28 of the following chapter (1 Kings 4), and read vv. 29-34.

Three books of the Bible are commonly ascribed to Solomon—The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. After a good deal of what we believe to be unprejudiced investigation, we cannot say that we are sure that tradition is totally misleading here. Of the Song of Songs, Farrar, in *SOLOMON: HIS LIFE AND TIMES*, pp. 171-173, says: "Perhaps the conjecture may be too bold, but if the beautiful Shulamite had her prototype in Abishag, whom Adonijah sought in marriage, and the mere mention of whose name made Solomon flame into pitiless anger, then the poet may conceivably have meant to point a silent contrast between the mother of Solomon, who though wedded and rich, yielded with disgraceful facility to the temptations of a guilty king, and 'the fairest among women,' the village maiden, who inflexibly resisted a more innocent advance."

The central theme of the Song of Songs is found in 8:6, 7. "Love is strong as death. Many waters cannot quench love." Read the verses. Read the entire Song some time today if possible. Its form is idyllic. It "tells us in dramatic form of how pure love in humble life triumphed over the splendid seductions of a royal wooer."

Recur in thought, for a moment, to the choice of Solomon with which this day's Study began.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). What application has this verse to the case of Solomon? How completely dominant over my life is the command here given? What definite experience have I had of the truth of this promise?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 15: SOLOMON, THE SON OF DAVID

3d Day: § 77. THE BOOKS COMMONLY ATTRIBUTED TO SOLOMON

"The nobler the truth or sentiment, the less imports the question of authorship."—*Emerson*.

Following is a practical outline of the book of Proverbs:

Superscription and introduction, 1:1-6.

I. The Wisdom section, 1:7-9:18.

Here are set forth the blessings of wisdom, and the dangers of unchastity. In every chapter is found the expression, "My son."

II. The great collection of moral, religious and prudential precepts, with appendices, 10:1-24:34.

1. Single-sentence maxims, 10:1-22:17.
2. Appendix 1, 22:18-24:22.
3. Appendix 2, 24:23-34.

III. Gleanings by the men of Hezekiah, with appendices, 25:1-31:31.

1. The Hezekiah collection, 25:1-29:27.
2. Appendix 1, The words of Agur, 30:1-33.
3. Appendix 2, The words of Lemuel, 31:1-31.

Spend two or three minutes only on Prov. c. 1-9 as a whole, underlining the expression, "My son" and the word "wisdom," and allowing your mind to dwell on a verse here and there as it is inclined. C. 3:13-18 is a good passage to memorize.

Read aloud without pausing, except to check with pencil in the margin most striking sentiments, as much of chaps. 1-9 as your time will permit. Read James 1:5-8; 3:13-18.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Note the sentiment of two or three passages which you checked with pencil as you read, and ask yourself why you marked them. Test your life by them and by Prov. 2:3-5.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 15: SOLOMON, THE SON OF DAVID

4th Day: § 75. THE TEMPLE AND THE PALACE OF SOLOMON

"Every student needs a wider life and a deeper life. Christ did those two things for His disciples. He widened the circle of their ideas, and He deepened the intensity of their convictions. The hardest things in the world to unite are breadth of apprehension with intensity of convictions."—*President Faunce.*

While many modern critics have questioned (for reasons which we think inconclusive) the Solomonic authorship of Proverbs, c. 1-9, there is general agreement that the bulk of the remainder of the book is Solomon's. No more time can be given in these Studies to these valuable precepts, but the student is advised himself to make place for them, if at all possible. If you find that the directions here given do not consume all your time for daily Bible study, read a chapter from the Proverbs in addition each morning until you shall have completed the book. Mark the most striking proverb of each chapter.

The most important part of § 75 is the blessing and the prayer at the dedication of the Temple (1 Kings c. 8), preliminary to a careful reading of which spend not more than five minutes in extracting the thought of 1 Kings 5:1-8:11. In doing this dwell longest upon 5:1-12; 6:11-13; 8:1-11.

Read § 75, (1 Kings) 8:12-66, for its revelation of God as conceived by Solomon, and for its revelation of Solomon at his best. Note what is said about the stranger. In this is part of the revelation of God here given.

In the parallel passage read 2 Chron. 2:5, 6; 3:1; 5:11-14; 6:40-42; 7:1-10.

Read Acts 7:46-49; John 4:21-23.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Continuing on this passage in John, consider the Father as the object of worship. Think of the meaning of worship. It is worthship. The Father seeks those who appreciate and acknowledge His worth. What place in my devotions does worship have? How am I to grow in appreciation of the worthiness of God?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 15: SOLOMON, THE SON OF DAVID

5th Day: § 76. THE GLORY AND THE DECLINE OF SOLOMON

"In your morning watch, let renewal of surrender to absolute obedience for the day be prominent: let confession and prayer be definite. Let your outlook on the day you are entering upon be a very determined resolve that obedience to God shall be its controlling principle."—*Murray.*

Read § 76, (1 Kings) 9:1-9. Compare the parallel passage, 2 Chron. 7:11-22. Recall the time and occasion and message of the former dream. (See 1 Kings 3:5 ff. Compare 1 Kings 6:38; 7:1; and see 2 Chron. 8:1 for time.) It would appear that the reign of Solomon was about halved by this second communication from God. The second twenty years of Solomon's reign witnessed his greatest external, political glory and his religious decline. Did you notice the note of warning in this second dream?

Read rapidly the remainder of the Chronicler's account of the life of Solomon. See § 76, (2 Chron.) 8:1-9:30, noting the most striking things. Have you yet noticed the marked difference between the record of David's life and that of Solomon? David as a man is much more fully set before us, and in the record of him is much of spiritual instructiveness; whereas Solomon's life is composed mainly of details about commerce, buildings and organizations. Solomon, the official, is more prominent than Solomon, the man.

Will you have time to read the tenth chapter of Proverbs?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: In my best moments—when the unseen and eternal is most real to me, and when visions of God and self come—am I warned against anything which I am allowing? I may be able to pray in public better than ten years ago, but how much stronger am I in my heart against the seductions of sin?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 15: SOLOMON, THE SON OF DAVID

6th Day: § 76. THE GLORY AND THE DECLINE OF SOLOMON

"'Tis but the moral of all human tales;
'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past:
First freedom and then glory: when that fails,
Wealth, vice, corruption—barbarism at last."—*Selected.*

Merely glance over § 76, (1 Kings) 9:10-10:29, which is a parallel account of the main portions of yesterday's text; afterwards read 1 Kings c. 11. Why is the account of Solomon's apostasy not found in Chronicles? Spend a moment or two on Diagrams XVI and XVII, noting the time, purpose, etc., of the writing of the Kings and Chronicles. What indications have you that Solomon's religious decline was gradual? Does the passage for today, compared with 2 Chron. 8:11, furnish one? What would you name as the secret of this failure? What reason is given in today's passage?

What is your opinion of the following estimates of Solomon? "I have not read of any king who so belied the promise of his early days, and on whom prosperity produced so fatal an apostasy as Solomon."
—*Lord.*

"Saul, with his early meekness and magnanimity, and his troubled soul, and his tragic end; David, in his heroism, and his fall, and his penitence, are far more interesting and significant figures for mankind than the brilliant builder and trafficker who grew into an uxorious, a ruined and an apostate autocrat. The story of Solomon is the story of one whose heart was perverted and his will enervated by luxury and pride."—*Farrar.*

"Saul was self-willed; David was self-subdued; Solomon was self-contained. The religion of Saul was associational; the religion of David was personal; the religion of Solomon was official. The story may be read in yet another light. Man is a composite being, and each man has to decide which part of himself shall rule the whole. Saul made the body rule; David made the heart rule, and Solomon made the mind rule. So these first three kings illustrate primary religious truths for all the ages."—*Tuck.*

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "His heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father." From my knowledge of David what characteristic of his do I understand the writer to have had in mind when he wrote these words? Is my heart perfect with God in this sense?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 15: SOLOMON, THE SON OF DAVID

7th Day: § 77. THE BOOKS COMMONLY ATTRIBUTED TO SOLOMON

"Lord, before I commit a sin it seems to me so shallow that I may wade through it dry-shod from any guiltiness; but when I have committed it, it often seems so deep that I cannot escape without drowning. Thus I am always in the extremities; either my sins are so small that they need not my repentance, or so great that they cannot obtain Thy pardon. Lend me, O Lord, a reed out of Thy sanctuary truly to measure the dimensions of my offenses. But O, as Thou revealest to me more of my misery, reveal also more of Thy mercy."—*Thomas Fuller*.

The following from the book of Ecclesiasticus (not Ecclesiastes) 47:13-21, well marks the stages of Solomon's career: "Solomon reigned in a peaceable time, and was honored; for God made all quiet round about him, that he might build an house in His name, and prepare His sanctuary forever. How wise wast thou in thy youth, and as a flood, filled with understanding! Thy soul covered the whole earth, and thou filledst it with dark parables. Thy name went far unto the islands; and for thy peace thou wast beloved. The countries marveled at thee for thy songs, and proverbs, and parables, and interpretations. By the name of the Lord God, which is called the Lord God of Israel, thou didst gather gold as tin, and didst multiply silver as lead. Thou didst bow thy loins unto women, and by thy body thou wast brought into subjection. Thou didst stain thy honor, and pollute thy seed: so that thou broughtest wrath upon thy children, and wast grieved for thy folly. So the kingdom was divided, and out of Ephraim ruled a rebellious kingdom."

Apart from all questions of authorship, there is a fitness in the association of the Song of Songs with the pious youth of Solomon, the Proverbs with his prosperous manhood, and the book of Ecclesiastes with his later and declining years. Give the time today to an examination of the book of Ecclesiastes.

First of all spend not more than five minutes in running through the chapters for the expressions: (1) "Under the sun," which occurs about thirty times; (2) "under heaven"; and (3) "on the earth." Underline these expressions, and as you do so glance at the connection. You will be struck by the frequent use of such words as, vanity, work, no profit, toil, etc.

The thought of the book of Ecclesiastes may be stated in the words of

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 15: SOLOMON, THE SON OF DAVID

7th Day: § 77. THE BOOKS COMMONLY ATTRIBUTED TO SOLOMON

1 Cor. 7:31: "Use the world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." The theme might be stated thus: A discussion of the abuse and use of this world.

The theme as developed might be stated thus:

I. The abuse of the world is folly. Note the expression "under the sun." This proved:

1. By an exhaustive personal experience.
2. By extensive observation.
3. By consideration of various forms of so-called earthly good.

II. The use of the world should be moderate and in the light of two facts:

1. What you enjoy is God's gift.
2. Remember that the judgment is coming.

The book does not yield satisfactorily to an outline. The following is as good as any:

Prologue—The problem—I :1-11.

I. The Highest Good not found in wisdom, pleasures, or toil,
c. 1, 2.

II. The Highest Good not found in commercial or political pursuits, c. 3, 4, 5.

III. The Highest Good not found in wealth and the golden mean, c. 6-8:15.

IV. The Highest Good found in enjoying present and hoping for future good, 8:16-12:7.

Epilogue—The solution, 12:8-14.

Give attention for the remainder of your time today to the fourth division and the epilogue. If possible before passing to the next Study read the entire book without interruption in the light of suggestions given above.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Meditate upon the prayer found at the head of this day. Ask God to help you to make it in reality your own.

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STUDY 16: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF PRE-ASSYRIAN TIMES

1st Day: § 78. REHOBAM OF JUDAH AND JEROBOAM OF ISRAEL

“Early and provident fear is the mother of safety.”—*Burke*.

Read § 78, (1 Kings) 11:26-40, and as you do so note: (1) What is said of Jeroboam's ancestry, character, and ability; (2) What is said about David; (3) The reasons assigned for giving Jeroboam ten tribes; (4) The conditions on which his kingdom would be established.

Look up on a map the location of the tribe of Ephraim to which Jeroboam belonged. Whose son was Ephraim? Where were Joseph's bones at this time? (See Exodus 13:19; Joshua 24:32.) Note again where Rehoboam went to be made king (12:1). To what tribe did Joshua belong? Is there any special significance in the revolt against Judah being headed by Ephraim? Think down into this.

Read § 78, (1 Kings) 12:1-20, estimating as you do the character of Rehoboam. We have here some new light on the character of Solomon's reign. What is it? In the advice of the old men is found a suggestion of the influences of the last days of David, and in that of the young men, a suggestion of the influences of the last days of Solomon. Think on the lowering of the level of morality which must have occurred during the reign of Solomon.

We are now past the time in Jewish history when the Psalter and the book of Proverbs were created. While additions were made after their day, these two books are rightly associated with David and Solomon as authors-in-chief. The book of Psalms is justly regarded as the most devotional portion of the Bible, and nothing could be more practical than the book of Proverbs. Moreover, it is especially suited to young men. It will be a part of the plan of these Studies from this time on, to introduce a portion of the book of Proverbs or a Psalm into each day's meditation.

Read Proverbs 1:1-19, and think of Rehoboam and his foolish friends.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: “He . . . took counsel with the young men that were grown up with him, that stood before him.” Whose counsel do I seek? What should one be on double guard to avoid in seeking counsellors? Does the Wonderful Counsellor have His place in my life?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 16: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF PRE-ASSYRIAN TIMES

2d Day: § 78. REHOBOAM OF JUDAH AND JEROBOAM OF ISRAEL

“When the Lord changes our petitions in His answers it is always for the better. He regards (according to that well known word of St. Augustine) our well more than our will. We beg deliverance; we are not unanswered if He give patience and support.”—*Robert Leighton*.

Read § 78, (1 Kings) 12:21-33. Who was the messenger of God to Rehoboam? Did Rehoboam show any disposition to consult God about plans? Who had before advised Jeroboam of God's will? What indication is there that Jeroboam, after becoming king, did not seek this prophet's advice, or that of any other man of God? Note the expression in v. 30, “And this thing became a sin.” Locate Bethel and Dan.

Read § 78, (2 Chron.) 11:1-23, noting in particular what is said about the migration of the God-fearing priests and people.

Read § 78, (2 Chron.) 12:1-16, giving special attention to the place of Shemaiah in the narrative. What is he called here? What was he called in the record of yesterday? (See 2 Chron. 11:2.) Do not miss what is said of him in v. 15. Re-read vv. 12-14, and 1 Kings 14:21-31, and estimate the character of Rehoboam.

Read Prov. 1:20-33.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: “He did that which was evil, because he set not his heart to seek the Lord.” What is it to set the heart to seek the Lord? What is there in setting the heart to seek the Lord which delivers from evil doing?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 16: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF PRE-ASSYRIAN TIMES

3d Day: § 79. A MAN OF GOD AND AN OLD PROPHET

"In the absence of a clear command, stay where you are and do your stint as if it were the finishing touches of the universe. Wait on close and present duty. Let only a clear, sharp call cause you to look up. Be willing and obedient and busy. God will make you hear."—*Wooley*.

The quotation given above has a special application to the incident related in § 79. Be looking for it.

Read § 79, (1 Kings) 13:1-34.

"It is not difficult to trace the inducements which led to the utterance of that lie. The old prophet was one of those whose souls had once been visited by the visions of the Most High. But they seem to have vanished from him. His continued residence at Bethel, now that it had become the house of idols, was an actual instance and for the future an unlimited promise of compliance with evil. In such an one, painfully conscious of the fading away of the prophetic power, there would, of necessity, be a craving for acknowledgment by a brother in the great company of the prophets, even for the satisfaction of his own uneasy conscience. . . . The temptation to the other came in so seductive a shape—for old prophets counselling ease to kill the self-denying zeal of younger spirits, are ever Satan's chosen instruments. . . . He who had received his own command direct from God, suffered it to be overborne by the word of a man. . . . Surely we must read in such a spectacle the glory and the risk of being the servant of the jealous God."—*Wilberforce*.

Read Proverbs, 2d chapter.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Dwell upon the last sentence above and upon the quotation at the head of the page.

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STUDY 16: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF PRE-ASSYRIAN TIMES

4th Day: § 80. AHIJAH THE PROPHET AND JEROBOAM THE KING
§ 81. ABIJAH OF JUDAH AND JEROBOAM OF ISRAEL

"You do not educate a man by telling him what he knew not, but by making him what he was not, and what he will remain forever."—*Ruskin.*

Read § 80, (1 Kings) 14:1-20. What is the most striking fact or lesson here set forth? Do not miss the point, which seems to be plain, that Jeroboam did not trouble himself about true prophets until he himself got into trouble. Has there been any intimation in the record that he ever consulted Ahijah after the announcement that he should be king, until this time?

Read § 81, (2 Chron.) 13:1-22. Note the omission (v. 5) by Ahijah of the condition upon which the throne was to be established. Compare Psalms 132:12; 89:30-32. Yet it is involved in later statements. Read again vv. 11, 12, 18. What is the great lesson of this passage?

Glance over the outline of the book of Proverbs given in 3rd Day on Study 15, and read Proverbs, 3rd chapter. If you have not already done so, you should memorize vv. 13-18. Verses 5, 6 should also be memorized.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Dwell upon the quotation by Ruskin above, and upon the last verses referred to. What is it to acknowledge God in all one's ways? What was Jeroboam's fatal mistake in the light of Proverbs 3:5?

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STUDY 16. KINGS AND PROPHETS OF PRE-ASSYRIAN TIMES

5th Day: § 82. THE KINGS ABIJAM AND ASA OF JUDAH
§ 83. THE CHRONICLER'S ACCOUNT OF ASA OF JUDAH

"Spend the time you have spent in sighing for fruits, in fulfilling the conditions of their growth. The fruits will come, must come."—*Selected.*

Give one minute each on Diagrams XVIII, XIX and XX, and spend two minutes on Diagram XXI.

Read § 82, (1 Kings) 15:1-8. Read again v. 3. What were the sins of his father? Recall what you are able and afterwards glance over 1 Kings 14:21-24. Have you noticed how often David is referred to as a standard in this history? Note the expression in v. 7 ff. Yesterday's passage taken from Chronicles is an expansion of this.

Read § 82, (1 Kings) 15:9-24. Locate places mentioned. Look at Diagram XXII. What influences upon Asa in early life would incline him towards evil? What two persons mentioned would naturally have large influence over him? How do you account for his zeal for good? Who established the schools of the prophets? Were there active teachers of the true faith at this time? Do you recall the names of any prophets or seers lately mentioned? Glance at Diagram XXI.

Read § 83, (2 Chron.) 14:1-15:8, noting especially 14:11 and 15:1-8. What light do these last verses throw upon questions asked above?

Read Proverbs, 4th chapter, two choice verses of which are 18 and 23.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: In order to be able truly to make the prayer of 2 Chron. 14:11, what must be true of the enterprise in which one is engaged? Note: "in Thy name," "against Thee."

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STUDY 16: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF PRE-ASSYRIAN TIMES

6th Day: § 83. THE CHRONICLER'S ACCOUNT OF ASA OF JUDAH

"When you are studying, study; when you are recreating, recreate. Do one thing at a time, and what you are doing, do with your might; take hold sharp, and let go sharp."—*Bushnell*.

Read § 83, (2 Chron.) 15:8-16:14. In the light of this account, how must the statements that Asa's heart was perfect all his days be understood? Is there not a reference to idolatry here?

Give a moment or two to Diagram XXIII. Can a revival be made to order? Read again 15:13. What now do you think of the expression in yesterday's portion (1 Kings 15:14), "Asa's heart was perfect, but the high places were not taken away"? Was not the intention and effort of the king one thing, and the practice of the people another?

Re-read 2 Chron. 16:7-10, and think about the teaching. Here is an early instance of conflict between king and prophet. We shall have more of this. Recall David's treatment of the prophets. V. 9 should be memorized.

This statement in v. 12 implies that Asa ignored God; that in his distress he refused to recognize God, and sought human aid alone. The sin was not in seeking to the physicians, but in putting God aside.

What is your estimate of Asa's character? What is the great lesson of Asa's life? Can it be stated better than in 2 Chron. 15:3 ff? What is the revelation of the God of Asa?

Read Proverbs, 5th chapter. Note v. 21, marginal reading. Compare with 2 Chron. 16:9.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: What effect upon me has the teaching that God is continually discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart; that one's ways are before the eyes of the Lord? Do I shrink from Him, or do I welcome the fullest investigation? What considerations will encourage the habit of taking God into fullest confidence in everything? Read again 2 Chron. 16:9.

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STUDY 16: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF PRE-ASSYRIAN TIMES

7th Day: § 84. THE FIVE KINGS OF ISRAEL NEXT AFTER JEROBOAM

"No action, whether foul or fair,
Is ever done, but it leaves somewhere
A record, written by fingers ghostly,
As a blessing or a curse, and mostly
In the greater weakness or greater strength
Of the acts which follow it."—*Longfellow*.

Give two or three minutes to Diagrams XIX, XX and XXI.

The First King, Nadab the son of Jeroboam. Read § 84, (1 Kings) 15:25-32. What was the sin wherewith Jeroboam made Israel to sin? Read 1 Kings 12:26-33.

The Second King, Baasha an usurper. Read § 84, (1 Kings) 15:33-16:7. Note specially the reason given in v. 7 for the displeasure of the Lord.

The Third King, Elah the son of Baasha. Read § 84, (1 Kings) 16:6-10. What light does the passage yield on his character?

The Fourth King, Zimri an usurper. Read § 84, (1 Kings) 16:11-20.

The Fifth King, Omri founder of the fourth dynasty. Read § 84, (1 Kings) 16:21-28. Note the emphasis of Omri's wickedness, and that he founded Samaria. Read Micah 6:16. Glance at Diagram XVIII, for general idea of the relation of the times of Omri and Micah.

What is the great lesson of this record? What is the application of the quotation from Longfellow?

"Professor Law, who knew Scotland well, said that the practical sagacity of the Scotch was owing to their familiarity with the book of Proverbs. Read Proverbs, 6th chapter.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Re-read the words of Longfellow above and think of the evil which Jeroboam did after his day. What lay at the root of all the evil? Am I sure that I am keeping myself from idols?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 17: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

1st Day: § 85. ELIJAH AND THE FAMINE IN AHAB'S TIME

"You can do whatever you earnestly undertake."—*Stonewall Jackson*.

Read § 85, (1 Kings) 16:28-34. What were the sins of Jeroboam? What more did Ahab's sins include?

Read James 5:16, 17, observing marginal renderings.

Read § 85, (1 Kings) 17:1. What preceded this message to man according to the passage in James? What have we learned, in lives already studied, about the place of training in secret before a public career?

Read the remainder of the 17th chapter of 1 Kings. Re-read vv. 4, 9, emphasizing the word *there*. What is the lesson? What place is there for faith in the actions here described? What did faith call for? What did action prove? What did Elijah learn at the widow's house?

Read 1 Kings, 18th chapter. What is the great lesson of the passage? Reflect on Elijah in the presence of: (1) Obadiah; (2) Ahab; (3) The false prophets; (4) God. What is the distinguishing feature of his attitude in each instance? What are the characteristics of Elijah's prayer (vv. 36, 37)?

Read James 5:18.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him." Here indecision in opinion was the result of indecision in practice. To what degree, if at all, is failure to act the cause of my unbelief?

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STUDY 17: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

- 2d Day: § 85. ELIJAH AND THE FAMINE IN AHAB'S TIME
§ 86. AHAB OF ISRAEL AND BENHADAD OF SYRIA
§ 87. AHAB OF ISRAEL AND NABOTH THE JEZREELITE

The following prayer was prepared by Dr. Arnold of Rugby for his personal, daily use before going into the school-room:

"O Lord, I have a busy world around me; eye, ear and thought will be needed for my work to be done in that busy world. Now, ere I enter upon it, I would commit eye, ear and thought to Thee. Do Thou bless them, and keep their work Thine; that, as through Thy natural laws my heart beats and my blood flows without any thought of mine for them, so my spiritual life may hold on its course at these times when my mind cannot consciously turn to Thee to commit each particular thought to Thy service."

"He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust."

Read § 85, (1 Kings) 19:1-21, for an illustration of the truth of these words. Note the order in v. 10, and the "burning of his bridges behind him," by Elisha, v. 21.

You should be able to grasp the lesson of § 86 (c. 20) in about five minutes. Try now to do so. Read § 87 (c. 21) for its revelation of human character in: (1) Ahab; (2) Jezebel; (3) Elijah; (4) Naboth.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "As thy servant was busy here and there he was gone." A charge is: "Keep thy heart above all that thou guard-est." Why should I do this, and how? What evidence is there that I need to watch against being too busy with important things to attend to the most important matter?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 17: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

3d Day: § 88. AHAB OF ISRAEL AND MICAIAH THE PROPHET

“In life’s small things be resolute and great
To keep thy muscle trained; knowest thou when Fate
Thy measure takes, or when she’ll say to thee,
‘I find thee worthy; do this deed for me?’”—*Lowell*.

Read this most instructive selection, § 88, (1 Kings) 22:1-40; (cf. 2 Chron. 18:1-34), allowing the attention to be concentrated upon the moral heroism of the prophet Micaiah. Do not be diverted from this by curious questions. We shall learn more later about the character and methods of false prophets. The words of Ahab indicate that he had met Micaiah before. Josephus said it was he who condemned Ahab for letting Benhadad go free.

Micaiah speaks ironically. Did you discover this in reading? Give due weight to the fact that Ahab preferred false prophets after having been warned by the true prophets. Recall here his contact with Elijah. Read Micah 3:5, 6.

The special severity of the test of Micaiah was that the encounter was not with prophets of Baal, but with men who professed themselves to be even as he was, prophets of Jehovah. “The gift of prophecy could, it seems plain, be turned by the receiver into evil. He might trifle with it, he might dumb its utterance through fear of man. . . . The crisis of his moral trial had been accomplished when first for fear or for gain, he tampered consciously with the truth; when he ‘divined for money.’ Now he was the victim of what he then chose. We read not so much of the false prophets prophesying consciously a lie as of their seeing lying visions, and so uttering deceits.”—*Wilberforce*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: What influences are brought to bear upon me to induce me to believe, speak and live a lie? How may I resist them? How may I determine who are true prophets today and who are false? How does my judgment of preachers today compare with that of Ahab?

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STUDY 17: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

4th Day: § 89. JEHOSHAPHAT KING OF JUDAH

"You have no business with consequences: you are to tell the truth."
—*Johnson*.

Do not spend more than half your time for today on this first paragraph. Read the account in § 89, (1 Kings) 22:41-50, writing down the various things which Jehoshaphat is said to have done, *e.g.*, (1) He walked in all the ways of his father Asa; (2) He made peace with the king of Israel; (3) He put the remnant of the Sodomites out of the land. Do likewise with 2 Chron. 17. Recall what he did in the matter of Micaiah the prophet, 2 Chron., c. 18. Add to your list of Jehoshaphat's deeds as you read 2 Chron., c. 19. Pause a moment on the message of Jehu to Jehoshaphat. Give due consideration to the system of religious instruction and judicial administration inaugurated by Jehoshaphat.

Read 2 Chron., c. 20, which is one of the most instructive in the entire book. Give the bulk of the time to the prayer of Jehoshaphat and the instruction of Jahaziel the Levite. Note that the victory was accepted and acted upon in faith before it was, in a material sense, achieved. Re-read vv. 19-22.

'Jehoshaphat was certainly the ablest and most energetic king that had reigned over Judah since the time of Solomon. While it cannot be denied that the one fatal mistake which he made in joining affinity with Ahab, had, in course of time, the most disastrous consequences, leading as it did to the desecration of the Temple, the complete apostasy of the state during the space of six years, and the almost entire destruction of the seed of David; yet the immediate results were, in a worldly point of view, advantageous.'—*Deane*. We shall learn very soon how fatal Jehoshaphat's mistake was.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee." What do these last words mean? How constant is the maintenance of this attitude in my life? What are helps toward such constancy?

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STUDY 47: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

5th Day: § 90. THE LAST DAYS AND THE TRANSLATION OF ELIJAH

"Persist, persevere, and you will find most things attainable that are possible."—*Selected.*

Take frequent glances at Diagram XXIV, as you read § 90, (1 Kings) 22:50-2 Kings 1:18. What is the great lesson of this portion?

Read the remainder of the section, (2 Kings) 2:1-2:18.

Reflect on the words of Elijah, "The Lord the God of Israel before whom I stand."

"The events of Elijah's life are so full of dramatic interest that we are tempted to dwell upon *them*, and gather the lessons that they teach. But the actor in the scene of Carmel was far greater than the scene which he enacted; and the true lesson of his life—the revelation which is sent to the race through him—is only learned as we realize his marked individuality, and understand the message which is carried by his solitary, unsupported, but overwhelming testimony for Jehovah, the one, living, spiritual, holy God. Because he stood for God, he could dare—under the most extraordinary circumstances of strain and peril—to stand alone."—*Tuck.*

Give a minute or two to Proverbs, c. 8, dwelling upon vv. 16, 17, 35, 36, as they have been illustrated in the records which we have been studying.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha." What evidence had the sons of the prophets that this was so? "The works that I do shall ye do also." Who said this? To whom? How were the works to be performed? What evidence have I that the Spirit of Christ rests on me?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 17: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

6th Day: § 91. ELISHA THE PROPHET

"This one thing I have found, that it is not in man to think out a gospel, or to make a state of light by phosphorescence at his own center. He can have the great mystery of godliness only as it is mirrored in his heart by an inward revelation of Christ. Do the will and you shall know the doctrine—this is the truth I have proved by my twenty years of experience."—*Bushnell*.

The passage is 2 Kings 2:19-5:27. There are here accounts of: (1) The healing of the spring at Jericho; (2) The denouncing of the youths; (3) The victory of the three kings over Moab; (4) The widow's oil; (5) The birth, death and restoration of the Shunemite's child; (6) The poisoned pottage; (7) The multiplication of the loaves; (8) The healing of Naaman. If pressed for time, limit yourself to the last. Nos. (3) and (8) are perhaps the most important. If possible secure an intelligent grasp of the entire account. Hang up difficulties for the present; seek to know what the record says and note anything which helps you. Dwell upon Naaman's words, "I thought"; "Now I know." What produced the change? Read again the words of Bushnell at the top of the page.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: The prophet Elisha was frequently sought after. When was this, and why? Glance over the record for the answer. How helpful am I to others? How may I become more so?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 17: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

7th Day: § 91. ELISHA THE PROPHET

"You need not tell all the truth, unless to those who have a right to know it all. But let all you tell be truth."—*Horace Mann*.

The passage is 2 Kings 6:1-8:15. It contains accounts of: (1) The swimming of the axe-head; (2) The horses and chariots of fire in the mountain; (3) The siege of Samaria, and the four lepers; (4) The return of the Shunemite after the seven-year famine; (5) The visit of Elisha to Damascus. Dwell on (2) and (3).

One cannot help being impressed by the diversity in character and work between Elijah and Elisha. The one was the prophet of solitude; the other was the prophet of society. The one was the prophet of judgment, the other of mercy. In a sense these two men foreshadow John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. Spend a little time on the parallel. "It is not possible to mistake the character of the series of miracles which Elisha wrought. From first to last they bear upon them all the attributes of visitations of mercy. They are the very opposite of the judicial inflictions with which, through Elijah, the power of God broke forth to punish evil and to overawe the guilty."—*Wilberforce*.

"The more strong one's apprehension is of the degradation of the Israelitish people at that time, of their low, sensual idolatry, of their reverence for evil powers,—the more one feels how acts of this kind must have been needed to counteract their materialism, to undermine their religion of fraud and hatred, to establish, as no words or arguments could, the proof of an actual and gracious ruler."—*Maurice*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "We do not well: This day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace." What application of these words of the lepers may be made to the proclamation of the gospel today? Why do so many hold their peace? How may they be made to do as the lepers did? What part have I in making known the good tidings?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 18: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

1st Day: § 92. THE SONS OF AHAB OF ISRAEL, AND OF JEHOSEPHAT
OF JUDAH

"Your prime, one need is to do right, under whatever compulsion, till you can do it without compulsion, and then you are a man."—*Ruskin*.

Read the passage in Kings (2 Kings 8:16-29), referring, as you do so, to Diagrams XXIV and XXV. Try to get the whole situation clearly before you. Look a second time at v. 19. Re-read v. 28. Who before this had been in a similar alliance? The results of the fatal mistake of Jehoshaphat in marrying his son to the daughter of Jezebel are beginning to appear. Be looking for more serious disasters yet to come.

Read the passage in Chronicles (2 Chron. 21:1-22:9), noting any additions to the record in Kings. Note especially what is said about Elijah.

There are strong reasons for thinking that Joel prophesied in the reign of Jehoram of Judah or a little later. Spend not more than five minutes on the prophecy of Joel (especially the third chapter) to see if you discover any appropriateness to this situation in the words.

If time remains, give a moment to Proverbs, c. 9. Dwell on v. 10.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: The warning of this lesson is against entangling alliances. Am I sure that I do not need it? What is the only safe course to pursue in the choosing of associates?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 18: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

2d Day: § 93. ELISHA THE PROPHET AND JEHU KING OF ISRAEL

"You often understand the true connection of important events in your life, not while they are going on, nor soon after they are past, but only a considerable time after."—*Selected.*

Read the Section for today (2 Kings 9:1-10:36) without interruption, and allow the dramatic character of the story duly to affect you as well as the dreadful lesson on sowing and reaping.

"It causes great scandal to many amiable and worthy people that the Scripture does not stop to comment on these atrocities of Jehu, but appears to commend his zeal, and to rejoice that what he began he accomplished. I believe that a true portrait can never be a mischievous one, and that this is essentially true. Nothing is said to gloss over the ferocity of Jehu; you do not want words to tell you that you must hate it; your impulse, and it is a right one, is to do so. But there may be in the most ruffianly and brutal characters, not merely strength, but an intense hatred of hypocrisy, a determination to put it down, not for selfish ends, but because it is hateful: which determination is good and inspired of God. The Scripture teaches us to confess this, and, by so doing, clears, not confuses, all our earlier conceptions and judgments. We do meet with these characters in the world,—characters with something devilish lying close beside something which is really divine. . . . It is in the quiet time that a man is tested. Then we find out not only what he can do, but what he is. The test in this case failed."—*Maurice.*

Note the contrast between the righteous and the wicked in Proverbs, 10th chapter, and think of the illustrations in the history we are studying.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Afterward it yieldeth." (Heb. 12:11.) Read Gal. 6:7. Read again the quotation at the top of the page. Reflect on the harvest of Ahab's and Jezebel's sins which the kingdoms of Israel and Judah garnered. What am I sowing?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 18: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

3d Day: § 94. ATHALIAH, QUEEN OF JUDAH, AND JEHOIADA THE PRIEST

"Woman is at once the delight and the terror of man."—*Selected*.
"Women are ever in extremes; they are either better or worse than men."—*Selected*.

Read § 94, (2 Kings) 11:1-20, and compare 2 Chron. 22:10-23:21.

The following, while referring more directly to the characters studied yesterday, is not without its application to the story of today: "Elisha the son of Shaphat and Jehu the son of Nimshi did then together carry out the words of the prophet. For those words depended upon no mortal agency; they were the expressions of an eternal law which in some way or other would fulfill itself. This is the great lesson which the Bible teaches in every page. The righteous Will moves on steadily and irresistibly toward its own end; the unrighteous will struggles with it; seems to prevail; is broken in pieces. But seeing it is *Will* and not a blind necessity which rules in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth, it is all-important whether those who execute its decrees work in cheerful submission to it, or in blindness, with base and private designs. This was the great question for the ministers of God's purpose, whether they were prophets or soldiers, to consider then; it is the great question for us now. We may be sure that at the last, by our evil doings and the fruits of them, if not by our zeal for that which is sincerely good, we shall help to demonstrate the existence of a divine order in the world, and shall foretell its victory. It is for us to say in which way we shall perform the divine commission."—*Maurice*.

Glance over Proverbs c. 11, giving especial attention to vv. 10, 21, 30, 31.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: To what a pass has Judah come! A daughter of the idolatrous Jezebel is on the throne of David! Did Jehoshaphat dream of this when he began to be friendly with Ahab? Reflect on the Personal Thoughts of the last two days.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 18: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

4th Day: § 95. JEHOIADA THE PRIEST AND JOASH KING OF JUDAH

"Never be afraid to doubt. Never try to conquer doubts against time. Never force yourself to believe. If you try this way (that is, living up to the light which you have, whatever happens), you must be anything that it requires, a Jew, a Mohammedan, ready to go to the world's end, anything; most probably you must be a Christian."
—*Bushnell*.

Read § 95, (2 Kings) 11:21-12:21. What about the character of the two men, Jehoiada and Joash, does 12:2 disclose?

Read the following questions and look for answers in 2 Chron. 24:1-27. Why did the house of the Lord need repairing? Had the influence of the idolatrous worship introduced into Judah as the result of the alliance in Jehoshaphat's time, been destroyed with Athaliah the queen? Was Judah left in her evil course without warning? What most wicked deed did Joash the king sanction? What other generation was like this one? For answer to this last question, read Matthew 23:29-39.

As you read Proverbs, c. 12, note what truths are illustrated by the history we have been studying.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Which am I most like, Jehoiada or Joash, as seen in 2 Kings 12:2? What is essential in the character of one who is able not only to stand, but to help others to stand?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 18: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

5th Day: § 96. ELISHA THE PROPHET AND JEHOASH KING OF ISRAEL
§ 97. AMAZIAH OF JUDAH AND JEHOASH OF ISRAEL

"Sorrow tracketh wrong
As echo follows song.
On! On! On! On!"

Read § 96, (2 Kings) 13:1-25, noting what is said about the sins of Jeroboam. In connection with this account of the sickness and death of Elisha, think for a little of his character and work. What estimate of these would you infer from the record, was held in his own day? "O my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" These were the words which a king of Israel of Jehu's house spoke to Elisha as he lay sick and dying. He felt that a power was passing out of the world which was greater than his, and than that of all the kings who had been before him, because it was a power which had spread health and peace around it."

Refer to Diagram XXVI as you read 2 Kings 14:1-22. What a sorry plight Judah has come to be in! What is the reason assigned? For answer read 2 Chron. 25:1-28. Give special attention to the messages of the prophets and the king's treatment of them. Have you been impressed by the frequency of the mention of prophets since the time of the disruption of the nation? It would be well, if you can spare the time, to make a table of the prophets whose messages we have already heard. You might arrange material under such headings as, Who, When, Where, To Whom, Why, etc.

Note what parts of Proverbs, c. 13, are illustrated by today's history.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Reflect on 2 Chron. 25:8, 9. When had the mistake been made about the one hundred talents? Why had it been made? What lesson is here for me?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 18: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

6th Day: § 98. THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH AND JOEL THE PROPHET

"God is not a crutch coming in to help your lameness, unnecessary to you if you had all your strength. He is the breath in your lungs. The stronger you are, the more thoroughly you are yourself, the more your need of it, the more your need of Him."—*Phillips Brooks*.

The arguments wholly internal for and against the early authorship of Joel are about of equal weight. We give the preference to the early date. As intimated in Day 1st of this Study, there is good reason for assigning the prophecy to the reign of Jehoram of Judah. Some maintain that he prophesied in the reign of Joash of Judah. There is much in the message suited to more times than these two between the reigns of Jehoshaphat and Uzziah of Judah. After all, the determination of the date of this book is not essential to our present purpose. The thought of the book may be expressed in ten words, thus: Locusts—Drought—Locusts destroyed—Drought removed—Spirit given—Enemies destroyed. Note the progress of thought as more clearly suggested by the following:

5. Enemies vanquished and blessings bestowed.
4. Removal of Spiritual Drought.
3. Removal of Locusts and Drought.
2. Repentance and Prayer.
1. Locusts and Drought.

Read the prophecy in the light of the above, giving due attention to the conditions of the removal of evil and the bestowal of spiritual blessing. Read Acts 2:16-21. Was that an exhaustive fulfillment of Joel's words? Was it the first fulfillment? Is it not probable that there was in his own time a response to the prophet's plea, and consequent blessing? What estimate of Joel as a man do you form from his book?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "The dreams which Joel and Peter speak of, indicate a closer contact with realities, a more inward communion with Him who is true, an intolerance of shadows, a longing for substance." What is the judgment which the above sentence renders upon my dreams?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 18: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

7th Day: § 99. JEROBOAM II KING OF ISRAEL AND JONAH THE PROPHET

"What has not been universally observed is that the reality of the characters is inseparable from the truth of the narrative, and stands or falls with it.

"The characters are not created. They exist only by the facts. Try to believe the characters, yet doubt the facts. You will find you cannot do it."

"Read this dialogue between God and man; and the writer is a man. A man yourself, you are shocked at the man and you bless God. The writer has given God the last word and the best. . . . The book of Jonah is generally underrated; one reason is, it is judged by commentators who have never tried to tell an immortal story. . . . The truth is that 'Jonah' is the most beautiful story ever told in so small a compass. . . . In writing it is condensation that declares the master; verbosity and garrulity have their day, but only hot-pressed narratives live forever. . . . In 1328 words you have a wealth of incident and all the dialogue needed to carry on the grand and varied action. You have also character, not stationary, but growing just as Jonah grew, and a plot that would bear volumes, yet worked out without haste or crudity. . . . Only the great artists of the pen hit upon the perfect proportions of dialogue and narrative. . . . To my mind, speaking merely as an artist, the Acts of the Apostles eclipses all human narratives, and in the Old Testament, Genesis, Samuel, Jonah and Ruth stand pre-eminent, and Jonah above sweet Ruth by the greater weight of the facts and the introduction of the Deity. . . . The God of Jonah is the God of the New Testament. . . . Skimmers have discredited and sneered at a record they have never tried hard to comprehend: 'Facile judicat qui pauca considerat.'"—*Charles Reade*.

Employ the time today as you think best, only do not omit to give real thought to the revelation of God found in the book of Jonah. Some time you may wish to examine what Charles Reade in *BIBLE CHARACTERS* has to say on Jonah; also *THE STORY OF JONAH* by Dr. Luther T. Townsend; and *NEW LIGHT ON THE STORY OF JONAH* by Dr. H. C. Trumbull.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "It is not enough to fast for sin; we must fast from sin." What is the nature of my repentance? What must be the result if it is not real?



Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 19: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

1st Day: § 100. JEROBOAM II KING OF ISRAEL AND AMOS THE PROPHET

"If the characters of the Scripture are both a marvel of the mind, and also aids to faith, surely we ought to give up skimming them, and study them. Put them at their lowest, and they are a gold-mine; and in that mine surface washing has been productive; but to dig is better."—*Reade*.

Read the first four and the last five words of the book of Amos. Glance through the chapters and underline the expression, "Saith the Lord," or its equivalent.

Read Amos 1:1. Consult Diagrams XXVI and XXIX. Amos must have prophesied late in the reign of Jeroboam. What were the material and political condition of the Northern Kingdom at that time? Read 2 Kings 14:23-29.

Read Amos 1:2. This is the text. It summarizes the entire prophecy. Compare Joel 3:16. Did Amos take his text from Joel? What is the general import of this text of Amos?

In chapters 1, 2, we have a series of foreign prophecies. Read in order 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; also 2:1, 4, 6. Consult Diagram XXVIII. The expression, "For three, yea, for four," is probably rhetorical, and means, for abundant, yea, for superabundant. Go over the series, noting: (1) What is to occur; (2) Why this is to occur. Is there anything significant in the use of the word palaces by Amos? Is fire to be understood literally? What striking difference in the cause assigned appears when the speaker reaches Judah? Is anything said about wrong having been done God in the case of the other nations? Why this distinction? Again consult Diagram XXVIII, and think of the relationship of these nations to the children of Israel. What aggravation in the case of Israel is mentioned in 2:9-11? Would the Israelites approve Amos' utterances about the other nations? In doing so, were they not unconsciously condemning themselves?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: One of the great revelations of Amos 2:9-11, is, that judgment is according to knowledge and opportunity. What special privileges have I? How faithful am I in the improvement of these? Would Amos 2:9-12 condemn me? To what will abuse of the mercy of God certainly lead?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 19: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

2d Day: § 100. JEROBOAM II KING OF ISRAEL AND AMOS THE PROPHET

"I cannot forgive God for the suffering of others; when I look abroad upon this world and behold its cruel destinies, I turn from Him with disaffection; nor do I conceive that He will blame me for the impulse. But when I consider my own fates, I grow conscious of His gentle dealing; I see Him chastise with helpful blows, I feel His stripes to be caresses; and this knowledge is my comfort which reconciles me to the world. All those whom I now pity with indignation, are, perhaps, not less fatherly dealt with than myself. . . . If I from my spy-hole, looking with purblind eyes upon the least part of a fraction of the universe, yet perceive in my own destiny some broken evidences of a plan and some signals of an over-ruling goodness; shall I, then, be so mad as to complain that all cannot be deciphered? Shall I not rather wonder, with infinite and grateful surprise, that in so vast a scheme, I seem to have been able to read, however little, and that little was encouraging to faith?"—*Robert Louis Stevenson.*

We studied yesterday the series of foreign prophecies found in Amos, c. 1, 2. In c. 3 is a series of questions. Read the series (noting marginal rendering in v. 3—a verse usually misinterpreted because torn from its connection), and answer each by, *No*. They prepare for the thundering application in vv. 7, 8, which is: "My presence here announcing such a message ought to be evidence to you that what I have declared will surely come to pass." Think down into this paragraph. It is most graphic and most true. The full force of it does not at once strike one.

Read the remainder of the chapter, not omitting to observe the striking force of calling the heathen to witness and to be surprised at the evil in Samaria (vv. 9, 10). Chaps. 1, 2 ended with judgment. How does chap. 3 end? What is the text of Amos?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "You only have I known . . . therefore I will visit." The very reason given by the people why they doubted the word of Amos that judgment was coming, is declared by him to be the reason why the judgment would come. To what extent has the awful delusion ensnared me, that because I am a child of God I may therefore do wrong with immunity? How may I meet this in myself and others?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 19: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

3d Day: § 100. JEROBOAM II KING OF ISRAEL AND AMOS THE PROPHET

"The slightest sorrow for sin is sufficient if it produces amendment, and the greatest is insufficient if it does not."—*Colton*.

What was the series for Day 1st? What for Day 2d? In the fourth chapter of Amos we find a series of past warnings. After reading the chapter, note: (1) The chapter opens with a specific announcement of captivity (vv. 1-3). Cf. "Thus will I do unto thee" (v. 12); (2) vv. 4, 5 are ironical, referring to the multiplicity of the formal ceremonies; (3) Beginning with v. 6 is mentioned a series of five past calamities, viz.: famine (v. 6), drouth (vv. 7, 8), locusts, etc. (v. 9), pestilence (v. 10), Sodomlike visitation (v. 11); (4) The refrain, "Yet have ye not returned unto me," indicates the object of these visitations and the result.

Pause here to think back (aided by Diagrams) over the history of the Kingdom of Israel for visitations of war, famine, etc. Continue to note: (5) because of the refusal of His people to heed His warning, God announces that He is about to come in judgment, and calls upon His people to meet Him as their enemy; (6) v. 13 describes the kind of God who must now be met by His rejecters. Pause here for reflection.

While judgment is so prominent in this chapter, and in the book as a whole, have you not already discovered that it is reluctantly resorted to, and only after every effort of love to reclaim has failed?

Read Proverbs, chap. 15th, noting the application of vv. 3, 8, 10, 32, to the situation above considered.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Thy God, O Israel." Reflect on the God who was in the conception of the writer of Amos, chapter 4.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 19: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

4th Day: § 100. JEROBOAM II KING OF ISRAEL AND AMOS THE PROPHET

"The exercise of prophetic ministry in Israel of old, was always a proof of the nation's decline. . . . We shall find, in considering the ministry of the prophets, that, not only had each prophet a distinct ministry committed to him, but that, also, in one and the same prophet, there was a double mission; the Lord dealt with the conscience about present evil, while He pointed the eye of the faithful to the future glory. His cry was: 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.' . . . This was a ministry of a very elevated and holy character; it was a glorious commission to be told to stand amid the fragments of a crushed and ruined system, and there to point to the time when God would display Himself in victory."—*Selected.*

The two chapters of Amos (5th and 6th) for study today, reveal only judgment, although there is in c. 5 a series of invitations. Recall the series of the past three days. Look in c. 5 for invitations introduced by the word "Seek." Chapter 5 begins with a lament, and the case is represented as hopeless; it ends also in the same strain (v. 16, ff), and after another ironical outburst at formal worshipers, who, because of their observances, thought themselves to be immune from the day of the Lord, the prophet announces captivity beyond Damascus. Consult here Diagram XXVIII. If all the nations mentioned in chapters 1, 2 are to fall, whence must the destroyer come?

As you read chap. 5 now, ask yourself why the invitations are introduced if the case is hopeless. Possibly they refer to past invitations which had been unheeded. Probably they refer to the time of speaking, when, in the mercy of God, if Israel will, she may yet be saved. Apparently there is no response. It seems to be necessary to supply some such idea between vv. 15 and 16 to furnish a reason for the sentiment of v. 16 ff.

Read c. 6. Note how each chapter thus far ends with a sledge-hammer blow of judgment.

*PERSONAL THOUGHT: Reflect upon the God of Amos (see 4:13; 5:8). Where did Amos thus learn God? What is my conception of God as compared with that of Amos? What relation has one's conception of God to one's character? How may I cultivate a sense of the greatness and of the majesty of God?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 19: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

5th Day: § 100. JEROBOAM II KING OF ISRAEL AND AMOS THE PROPHET

"There is an energy of moral suasion in a good man's life, passing the highest efforts of the orator's genius. The seen beauty of holiness speaks more eloquently of God and duty than the tongue of men and angels."—*Chalmers*.

Read chapters 7, 8, 9 of Amos, omitting 7:10-17 and 9:11-15, in the light of the following:

I. A series of visions is: (1) Locusts (7:1); (2) Fire (7:4); (3) The Lord with a plumb-line (7:7); (4) A basket of ripe fruit (8:1); (5) The Lord standing by the altar (9:1).

II. Indications of a climacteric order in these visions may be noticed as follows:

1. Prayer is made and answered in the first two; it is not found in the last three.
2. The fire is more severe than locusts.
3. The prayer in the second is more intense than in the first. Destruction is threatened in both the first and second.
4. "I will not again pass by them any more," in the third, is indicative to Amos that it is needless to pray. By the plumb-line, decision has been rendered. Destruction is assured in the third.
5. "I will not again pass by them any more," is preceded in the fourth vision by the words, "The end is come upon my people Israel." This is a decided advance upon the plumb-line vision. Destruction is imminent in the fourth.
6. The Lord is represented as Himself giving orders, and superintending the demolition of the structure and the slaying of the people in the last vision. Destruction is represented as in progress in the fifth.

III. Observe the completeness and the severity of the destruction as depicted in vv. 2-4 of chapter 9.

IV. Note the discrimination used even in this as indicated in verses, 8-10 of chapter 9.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Reflect further on the God of Amos as presented in 4:13; 5:8, and 9:5, 6. Read yesterday's Personal Thought.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 19: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

6th Day: § 100. JEROBOAM II KING OF ISRAEL AND AMOS THE PROPHET

"We speak of omens and signs and premonitions; perhaps we know not what we mean. Even in Genesis the leaves are stirring; the air blows upon us as from another world. You feel that some one is coming, and so all through the Old Testament. Now it is a sudden flash of light, now a transparent darkness. We feel it in history, in psalms, in prophecy. Sometimes a great voice of thunder, sometimes a still, small voice of comfort. Did I hear the blast of a trumpet miles and miles away, rising and falling in a cadence? It is the sign of the King's approach. There will be a new personality amongst us."—*Joseph Parker.*

Read Amos 7:10-17. In the intimation by Amaziah that Amos was prophesying for a living, what does the priest of Bethel disclose as to his own character? Do not miss the strong contrast in the words, "Thou sayest," "Thus saith the Lord." What is the real force of v. 14a?

Read Amos 9:11-15, and consult Diagram XXXI.

"Does it seem to you that a hope so confident as this,—a hope of life arising out of death, light out of darkness, is inconsistent with that vision of utter ruin which rose up a moment ago before us? We shall not know the heart of the Jewish prophet till we learn to see not only how these things are compatible, but why they are inseparable."—*Maurice.*

What traits of character in Amos are worthy of imitation by preachers and teachers of today?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "He revealeth His secrets unto His servants the prophets." "I have told you before it come to pass . . . Ye are my friends." What place has sympathy, fellowship with God in His work, in bringing one into appreciation of God's message? How much has the lack of this in my life to do with my dullness in apprehending the Word of God?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 19: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF EARLY ASSYRIAN TIMES

7th Day: § 101. JEROBOAM II KING OF ISRAEL AND HOSEA THE PROPHET

"Love is strong as death. . . . Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it."—*Bible*.

Hosea is pre-eminently the prophet of love. Between him and Amos is an instructive contrast. "The two men are types of a contrast which runs through the whole history of religious thought and life down to our own time. The religious world has always been divided into men who look at questions of faith from the standpoint of universal ethics, and men by whom moral truths are habitually approached from a personal sense of the grace of God."—*Robertson Smith*.

It is difficult to outline the book of Hosea. The following is suggested as the most suitable for the purpose of these Studies:

- I. Chapters 1-3, prophecies concerning apostate Israel under the figure of the marriage relation.
- II. Chapters 4-14, a series of prophecies relating chiefly to Israel's downfall.

The best explanation of chapters 1 and 3, is, that they disclose a real and bitter domestic experience through which the prophet was brought into intelligent sympathy with God in the treatment which his chosen people had given him. A man, true to an unfaithful wife, declares the message of a true God to an unfaithful people.

Think of the prominence in the Bible of marriage as illustrative of the relation between God and His people.

Read Hosea 1-3. Do not miss the beauty and the power of this passage by allowing difficulties of interpretation of details to absorb attention.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Read Hosea 2:16. Compare our Lord's words, "No longer do I call you servants . . . but I have called you friends." Think on these things.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 20: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF MIDDLE ASSYRIAN TIMES

1st Day: § 102. THE LAST SIX KINGS OF ISRAEL AND HOSEA THE PROPHET

- “The very curse of an evil deed is that it must always continue to engender evil.”—*Schiller*.

Read § 102, (2 Kings) 15:8-31, taking frequent glances as you do so at Diagram XXXII. Consult also Diagram XXVII. You will not omit to note how to the last day of the kingdom of Israel the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat are mentioned.

Read § 102, (2 Kings) 17:1-41, referring to the above mentioned Diagrams. This entire chapter is very instructive. Look again at v. 13 ff. Vv. 24-41 are interesting as relating to the Samaritans.

The following are striking features of the book of Hosea: (1) The connection between the message of the prophet and his own personal experiences; (2) The figurative character of the language (especially notice the different figures by which Israel is characterized: as, Harlot, Stubborn heifer, Silly dove, Unturned cake); (3) The condensed, broken character of the composition; (4) The prominence given to Ephraim in the book. Hosea was evidently primarily a prophet of the North country; (5) The proportion of the book given to describing the moral condition of Israel. One-half of the verses refer to this; (6) The emphasis of the love of God.

The last day of Study 19 was given to (1) above. Occupy the remaining time today with (2), (3) and (4). Copy out the various names given to Israel, noting the context in each case, and underline the word Ephraim in your Bible.

- PERSONAL THOUGHT: “The sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat which made Israel to sin.” Down through the entire history of the Northern Kingdom, covering nearly 250 years, this sentence has been ringing in our ears. What is the great lesson of the story of the kingdom of Israel, the end of which we have now seen? How fully does my life today show that this lesson has been learned by me?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 20: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF MIDDLE ASSYRIAN TIMES

2d Day: § 102. THE LAST SIX KINGS OF ISRAEL AND HOSEA THE PROPHET

"The longer I live, the more I wonder at the forbearance and compassion of the Divine Mind."—*Rev. Edward White.*

That the historical situation may be more vividly before you, spend from three to five minutes in review of § 102, (2 Kings) 15:8-31, and 2 Kings 17:1-41, glancing at Diagrams XXVII and XXXII.

Read over the striking features of the book of Hosea, given in yesterday's lesson, fourth paragraph. Attention should be concentrated today upon the last two of these, viz.: (5) The moral condition of Israel at the time, and (6) The emphasis of the love of God in the book. Read a key passage on each as follows: 4:1-8; 11:1-9. As you examine the chapters, do not miss the force of the words, "For," "Therefore," "Because." Read a moment or two, beginning at 4:1, with these words in mind.

Is there a more tender passage in the Old Testament than Hosea 11:1-9? Read it again. Read chap. 14, which alone of the chapters of Hosea is one of almost unmingled brightness. It is with regret that we pass on from the study of Hosea. But the limits of these Studies require it. One says: "There is, I conceive, in every prophecy, and in every book which God has intended for the instruction of men, a leading thought which forces itself upon the mind of a serious reader, almost without his knowing it." What is the leading thought of Hosea for you?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Meditate upon Hosea 14:9. What is meant by "these things"? What profit have I received from them?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 20: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF MIDDLE ASSYRIAN TIMES

3d Day: § 103. UZZIAH KING OF JUDAH AND ISAIAH THE PROPHET

"In a word, this was felt to be the supreme need: *'to get God's man, in God's place, doing God's work, in God's way, for God's glory.'* 'God alone is sufficient for God's own work.'"—*Hudson Taylor*, on the secret of the success of the China Inland Mission.

Read § 103, (2 Chron.) 26:1-23, key verses of which are 5 and 16.

Preparatory to reading Isaiah, 6th chapter, read Isa. 1:1. In the reigns of what kings is he there said to have prophesied? Read 6:1 and 7:1. Observe that if there is any recorded prophecy belonging to Jotham's time it does not come in chronological order, else it would appear after chap. 6th, and before the events recorded in chap. 7th. Isaiah is not arranged chronologically. Note how the foreign prophecies are grouped in chap. 13 ff. Consult Diagram XXXIII.

The account of this vision of Isa. 6 may have been originally related in Jotham's time in justification of utterances which the prophet was making about the sins of his day and the judgments to come. We may easily understand the men of his day saying to Isaiah, "What right have you to talk to us thus?" Imagine the effect of his replying, "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord," etc.

Read now Isa. 6:1-13. Note the progress of the thought as follows: (1) A vision of God; (2) A vision of self and other people; (3) A confession of sin; (4) A cleansing from sin; (5) A call heard; (6) A response signifying readiness to do whatever might be required; (7) A commission to perform a difficult work.

Read Matt. 13:14, 15; John 12:40; Acts 28:26, 27. Is not the freedom of the persons to whom the message was proclaimed fully recognized in all these passages as well as in Isaiah? What is the effect of willful rejection of truth?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "When he was strong, his heart was lifted up, and he trespassed against the Lord." How may I cultivate humility, and thus avoid the fate of Uzziah? "I saw the Lord." What experience of my life is most worthy to be characterized as a real vision of God; the time when I was most conscious of the actual presence of God? How may I perpetuate the conscious presence of God? Fill out the following: "Blessed are the . . . for they shall see God."

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 20: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF MIDDLE ASSYRIAN TIMES

4th Day: § 104. JOTHAM KING OF JUDAH AND ISAIAH THE PROPHET

"We are not to suppose a faithful ministry is any easy task. No man can continually rebuke his age, and yet be living a luxurious life. The prophets of the Lord have always been opposed to the age in which they lived. Whenever the ministry has fallen into accord with the age, it is not the age that has gone up, it is the ministry that has gone down. We should have persecution revived were we to revive the highest type of godliness."—*Selected.*

Read § 104, (2 Kings) 15:32-38, and the parallel passage, 2 Chron. 27:1-9.

The question how long Jotham reigned after his father's death is difficult to settle, nor are we sure that we have any prophecy in Isaiah which belongs to Jotham's time. Chaps. 2-5 are the most likely. Yet these do not strongly impress us as so appropriate to the days of Jotham as to those of Ahaz, e.g., 3:12. "This", says one, "points to a time when the vigorous administration of Uzziah and Jotham had been succeeded by the weak and inefficient government of Ahaz."

Read Isa. 2:1-5:24 in the light of the following, noting especially the place of prediction of remote blessing in preaching meant to have real influence in the prophet's own time.

2:2-4	2:5—4:1	4:2-6	5:1-30
Remote future	Present, and immediate future	Remote future	Present, and immediate future
Bright	Dark	Bright	Dark
Promise	Threatening	Promise	Threatening
External glory	War	Internal glory	War

Did you get the force of 2:5? It is this: In the future all nations will believe in God. Why should you not do so now, O Israel?

What must have been the character of the man who uttered Isa., c. 2-5?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: With the song of the vineyard in mind (Isa. 5:1-7)—What has God done for me which would justify His looking for more fruit in my life than is now appearing? Why should I see to it that the fruit which is expected is produced?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 20: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF MIDDLE ASSYRIAN TIMES

5th Day: § 105. AHAZ KING OF JUDAH AND ISAIAH THE PROPHET

"Our business in life is not to get ahead of other people, but to get ahead of ourselves. To break our own record, to outstrip our yesterdays by todays, to bear our trials more beautifully than we ever dreamed we could, to whip the tempter inside and out as we never whipped him before, to give as we never have given, to do our work with more force and a finer finish than ever,—this is the true idea, to get ahead of ourselves. To beat some one else in a game may mean much or little. To beat our own game means a great deal."—*Trumbull*.

For a summary of the career and character of Ahaz read § 105, (2 Kings) 16:1-20. Compare 2 Chron. 28:1-27. Consult Diagram XXXIV, and read Isaiah 7:1-25.

"Ahaz has left behind him the reputation of being among the worst, if not actually the very worst, of all the princes of the house of David. He had neither courage, nor patriotism, nor energy, nor prudence, nor piety, nor even a decent regard for the traditions of his house and nation. . . . In vain did Isaiah warn him, rebuke him, offer him signs, threaten him, urge him to rely on Jehovah; he doggedly pursued his own course, sought help in every quarter but the right one, put his trust in arms of flesh or in the gods of the nations, cared not how he degraded his country or disgraced his noble lineage, persisted in evil, ever trespassed more and more until God cut him off in the very prime of life."—*Rawlinson*.

Following the method adopted in 4th Day of this Study for Isa. 2:2-5:30, examine as much of 7:1-12:6 as you can comfortably read in the time. What estimate, by this time, have you formed of Isaiah?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." Is faith ever demanded without evidence? What special incentive to believe was proposed to Ahaz? What is the place of the will in belief? Do I believe to the extent to which I am authorized to believe? Is the object of belief a proposition or a person?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 20: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF MIDDLE ASSYRIAN TIMES

6th Day: § 106. JOTHAM, AHAZ, AND HEZEKIAH KINGS OF JUDAH AND MICAH THE PROPHET

"Do thy part with industry, and leave the event with God. I have seen matters fall out so unexpectedly that they have taught me in all affairs neither to despair nor to presume."—*Feltham*.

Read with the primary purpose of estimating the character of Micah.

Read chap. 1 and note the following striking facts: (1) Micah was contemporary with Isaiah and Hosea. (Cf. introductory verses of the books.) Imagine these three men in conference; (2) Micah's vision was concerning both Samaria and Jerusalem. It must have been then before what date? (3) The graphic manner in which the prophet describes his feeling when he sees that suffering will reach even to Jerusalem.

Read chap. 2, noting: (1) The denunciation in v. 1, of the principle that might makes right; (2) The use of the word *devise* in v. 3. Cf. v. 1; (3) The correspondence between sin and the punishment, vv. 4, 5; (4) The emphasis in vv. 7-10 of the fact that evil is occasioned by wrong doing. This is an answer to the charge of the false prophets, v. 6. Cf. also v. 11; (5) The promise in vv. 12, 13, in contrast with the preceding declaration of coming disaster which occasioned the charge against Micah by the false prophets.

Read chap. 3, noting: (1) The prominence of priests, prophets, rulers and judges as leaders in evil doings; (2) The force of the figure (cannibalism) of oppression in vv. 2, 3; (3) The emphasis of the fact that sinners shall be punished according to their sins, v. 4, and that gifts perverted shall be withdrawn, vv. 5-7; (4) The declaration by Micah, v. 8, of his mission under God to tell the truth in opposition to the false prophets; (5) The presence of the passage, v. 12, which figured in a very important connection afterwards in the life of Jeremiah. Cf. Jer. 26:18.

What is now your estimate of Micah as a man?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Meditate on Micah 3:8. Does the Micah type of prophet prevail today? What reason have I to believe that I am not of the false prophet type here described?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 20: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF MIDDLE ASSYRIAN TIMES

7th Day: § 106. JOTHAM, AHAZ, AND HEZEKIAH KINGS OF JUDAH
AND MICAH THE PROPHET

"One comfort is, that great men, taken up in any way, are profitable company. We cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man, without gaining something from him. He is the living light-fountain, which it is good and pleasant to be near."—*Carlyle*.

Continue reading in Micah, beginning at the fourth chapter. Note the following: (1) The presence of a passage (vv. 1-3) which is found almost word for word in Isa. 2:2-4; (2) The promising character of this chapter in the main; (3) Recognition of the fact that the expected glory would come after a period of suffering; (4) The mention of Babylon in v. 10; (5) The difference between God's view of things and the world's view, vv. 11, 12. Note the frequent use of the word Zion in this chapter.

In chap. 5 note: (1) The presence, in v. 2 ff, of the remarkable Messianic passage quoted in the New Testament; (2) The contrast of this with the statement in v. 1, that the king of Israel should be smitten on the cheek; (3) The connection of this Messianic passage with the anticipated deliverance from Assyria, v. 5; (4) The things mentioned which would be destroyed; (5) the hopeful character of the chapter.

Read chap. 6 and note striking facts.

Read chap. 7, noting: (1) The wail of the prophet over the very corrupt state of affairs, vv. 1-6; (2) The striking similarity of v. 6 to words uttered by our Lord. Cf. Matt. 10:21, 35, 36; (3) The fact that the good, in the midst of such distress and wickedness, manifest faith in God; (4) The world-wide view here, vv. 12, 16; (5) The remarkable tribute of praise to God as one who forgives sin and puts it away forever, vv. 18, 19. Vv. 7-20 of this chapter are regarded by some as one of the sweetest passages in all prophetic literature.

What is now your estimate of Micah?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Who is a God like unto thee?" is a free translation of the name Micah. What have I discovered in the God of Micah which assures me that He is the only God? What attribute of God is most prominently set forth in Micah, 7th chapter? Do I know by experience that this is a true description of God?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 21: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF MIDDLE ASSYRIAN TIMES

1st Day: § 107. HEZEKIAH KING OF JUDAH, AND ISAIAH THE PROPHET

"The characteristic of heroism is its persistency. All men have wandering impulses, fits and starts of generosity. But when you have resolved to be great, abide by yourself, and do not weakly try to reconcile yourself with the world. The heroic cannot be the common, nor the common heroic. Yet we have the weakness to expect the sympathy of people in those actions whose excellence is that they out-run sympathy and appeal to a tardy justice!"—*Emerson*.

The topic for today is the reformation of Hezekiah. What reformers preceded him? Was there need in his time of reformation? Who was his father, and what did he do? Consult Diagrams XXIII and XXXV. Read 2 Chron. 29:1-11. What did Hezekiah do? What did he say, and to whom? When did he say and do these things? Read the remainder of 2 Chron., chap. 29. Note the expression, "all Israel," twice used in v. 24. We shall see from the next chapter that Hezekiah's design was to reunite the whole nation into a single religious community. The Northern king was already a vassal of Assyria, and the end of the kingdom of Israel was near.

Read 2 Chron. 30:1-27, remembering that still another chapter is to be considered today. It is not at all necessary to suppose that the fall of Samaria and the final captivity of Israel had taken place when these events occurred.

Read 2 Chron. 31:1-21, also 2 Kings 18:4. Think about the thoroughness with which this reformation was conducted, and the opposition which must have been encountered. But is idolatry destroyed when the idol is removed by force? Think about the character of Hezekiah and write out in brief form your estimate of him. What part do you imagine Micah and Isaiah had in the reformation of Hezekiah?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "And in every work that he began.... he did it with all his heart." Read the entire verse (2 Chron. 31:21). What good work have I begun in which I have not persisted? Read the quotation at the head of the page. "Create in me a steadfast spirit, O God."

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 21: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF MIDDLE ASSYRIAN TIMES

2d Day: § 107. HEZEKIAH KING OF JUDAH, AND ISAIAH THE PROPHET

The following is continued from yesterday. Read the quotation there and continue here: "If you would serve your brother, because it is fit for you to serve him, do not take back your words when you find that prudent people do not commend you. Be true to your own act, and congratulate yourself if you have done something strange and extravagant and broken the monotony of a decorous age. It was a high counsel that I once heard given to a young person, 'Always do what you are afraid to do.'"—*Emerson*.

The history of Hezekiah as given emphasizes four important events, the most probable order of which is as follows: (1) The reformation; (2) The illness and recovery; (3) The embassy from the king of Babylon; (4) The invasion of Sennacherib. Consult Diagram XXXV. The reformation occurred before the fall of Samaria, which was besieged by Shalmaneser but actually taken by Sargon. Sargon afterwards made an expedition to the West which affected Judah. Read Isa., c. 20.

The illness of Hezekiah most likely occurred 713 B. C. There was an eclipse in September, 713, with which the going back of the shadow may have been connected.

Read 2 Kings 20:1-11. The announcement of Hezekiah's death was apparently unconditional. Was it really so? Why was not the condition expressed? Compare your thought in reply to the last question with the following: "The condition is not expressed because God would draw it from him as a voluntary act."

Read attentively the thanksgiving psalm of Hezekiah (Isa. 38:9-20) and record best things. Check expressions not understood. Vv. 10-14 are retrospective. In vv. 15-17 he "describes how Jehovah promised him help, how this promise put new life into him, and how it was fulfilled and turned his sufferings into salvation. In vv. 18-20 he rejoices in the preservation of his life and promises to praise God for it as long as he lives."—*Delitzsch*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Meditate upon the words: "Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back." How should I live today if God has done this for me?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 21: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF MIDDLE ASSYRIAN TIMES

3d Day: § 107. HEZEKIAH KING OF JUDAH, AND ISAIAH THE PROPHET

Read quotations of the last two days and continue here: "Times of heroism are generally times of terror, but the day never shines in which this element may not work. Whoso is heroic will always find crises to try his edge. Human virtue demands her champions and martyrs, and the trial of persecution always proceeds."—*Emerson*.

The account of the visit of the embassy from the king of Babylon given in Isa., c. 39, is practically the same as that found in 2 Kings 20:12-21. Read the latter passage. Read 2 Chron. 32:31. What reason is there given why the embassy came? In view of political conditions what was likely the real reason why the visit was made? Is the prophet's condemnation to be interpreted on the assumption that an alliance between Judah and Babylon against Assyria was in contemplation? Why should such an alliance be open to objection?

Read again 2 Chron. 32:31. Does "he" in the expression "that he might know" refer to Hezekiah or to God? Read Deut. 8:2, 3.

"The tendency to worship the gold of Ophir, to think of that as the strength of men and nations, lay near the heart of this king and people, as it is near the heart of us all. . . . Hezekiah showed all his treasures. . . . It was otherwise with the prophet. He had been taught to look through the mere temporary representatives of a principle to the principle itself."—*Maurice*.

Write out a brief estimate of the character of Isaiah and Hezekiah as thus far studied.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "God left him, to try him, that He might know all that was in his heart." How would I stand such a test as Hezekiah met? How thoroughly have I learned that my heart is deceitful above all things? What is the only means by which I may today meet God's expectations in respect to my life?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 21: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF MIDDLE ASSYRIAN TIMES

4th Day: § 107. HEZEKIAH KING OF JUDAH, AND ISAIAH THE PROPHET

"Persevere against discouragement. Keep your temper. Preserve self-possession, and do not be talked out of a conviction. Maintain dignity without the appearance of pride. Be guarded in discourse. Be not forward to assign reasons to those who have no right to ask. Rather set than follow examples. In all your transactions remember the final account."—*Maxims of Bishop Middleton*.

The invasion of Sennacherib is the fourth event made prominent in the record of Hezekiah's reign. What are the other three?

Read Isa. 14:24-27. State in a brief sentence of your own the leading thought of this paragraph.

Read 2 Chron. 32:1-8. Does this noble confidence in God endure? We shall see.

Read 2 Kings 18:14-16.* But did Hezekiah obtain permanent relief? Read 2 Kings 18:17-37. What did Hezekiah do under the circumstances, and with what results? Read 2 Kings 19:1-7, also 2 Chron. 32:9-23.

"In all the Bible there is not a personage more clever than this Rabshakeh, nor more typical. He was an able deputy of the king who sent him, but he represented still more thoroughly the temper of the civilization to which he belonged. . . . A clever, fluent diplomatist, with the traveler's knowledge of men and the conqueror's contempt for them. . . . a creature able to speak to natives in their own language, full and ready of information, mastering the surface of affairs at a glance, but always baffled by the deeper tides which sway nations; a deft player upon party interests and the superficial human passions, but unfit to touch the deep springs of men's religion and patriotism."—*G. A. Smith*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Returning in thought to the inconstancy of Hezekiah's trust in God, inquire into your own record in respect to the same, and try to answer the question: How may I continue steadfast in my devotedness to God? Are there means to this end? If so, what are they? Am I employing them?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 21: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF MIDDLE ASSYRIAN TIMES

5th Day: § 107. HEZEKIAH KING OF JUDAH, AND ISAIAH THE
PROPHET

"He shall call upon me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble."—*Psalm 91:15*.

Continuing the study of Sennacherib's invasion, read Isa. 17:12-14.
What is the application of these verses to the subject?

Read 2 Kings 19:8-37. Who is the hero of the occasion? "This scene is a parable of the everlasting struggle between faith and force, with doubt and despair between them. In the clever, self-confident, persuasive personage with two languages on his tongue and an army at his back; in the fluttered representatives of official religion who meet him; in the ranks of the dispirited men who hear the dialogue; in the sensitive king so aware of faith, and yet so helpless to bring faith forth to peace and triumph; and, in the background of the whole situation, the serene prophet of God, grasping only God's word, and proving that faith can be the substance of things hoped for—we have a phase of the struggle ordained for every generation of men."—*G. A. Smith*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Read 2 Kings 19:4, 19. On what did Hezekiah ground his hope? Would failure to receive a favorable response to my prayer bring reproach upon God? How often do I use Hezekiah's argument in prayer? Are my interests and God's interests identical?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 21: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF MIDDLE ASSYRIAN TIMES

6th Day: § 107. HEZEKIAH KING OF JUDAH, AND ISAIAH THE PROPHET

"Fame is vapor, popularity an accident, riches take wings, those who cheer today will curse tomorrow, only one thing endures—character."
Horace Greeley.

Spend two or three minutes on Diagram XXXIII, with special reference to chapters 7-12. Note what this portion is called. Glance over the chapters for the word Assyria and underline it wherever found. Give a few minutes to: (1) What the Assyrian is to do to the people of God; (2) What God will do with the Assyrian. Is there anything more dramatic than the first part of chap. 10? Spend any remaining moments in working out the contrast between the *forest* (chap. 10), and the *twig* (chap. 11). Reflect upon the occasion and content of these Messianic passages found in Isa. 7-12.

"Israel never wholly lost the grace of the baptism wherewith she was baptised in 701 B. C. There is no event even in her history in which the unaided interposition of God was more conspicuous. It is from an appreciation of the meaning of such a Providence that Israel derives her character—that character which marks her off so distinctively from her great rival in the education of the human race, and endows her ministry with its peculiar value to the world. . . . In Greece the human is greater than the divine. . . . In Judah man is great simply as he rests on God. The rocks of Thermopylæ, how imperishably beautiful do they shine to the latest ages with the comradeship, the valor, the sacrificial blood of human heroes! It is another beauty which Isaiah saw upon the bare, dry rocks of Zion, and which has drawn to them the admiration of the world. 'There!' said he; 'Jehovah is glory for us, a place of broad rivers and streams.'"—*G. A. Smith.*

• **PERSONAL THOUGHT:** Read Isa. 11:2, and measure yourself thereby. "Your heavenly Father is willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 21: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF MIDDLE ASSYRIAN TIMES

7th Day: § 108. SONGS OF DELIVERANCE FROM THE ASSYRIAN

“Just in the last distressing hour
The Lord displays delivering power;
The mount of danger is the place
Where we shall see surprising grace.”

Read the 75th Psalm, which is regarded by many as celebrating if not anticipating the deliverance from Sennacherib. The psalm opens with ascription of praise, passes to the announcement of God's righteous judgment, and closes with a determination to publish the praise of Jehovah forever.

Read the 76th Psalm, which is generally regarded as celebrating the overthrow of the Assyrian King in Hezekiah's time. Note the division into four strophes of three verses each. Characterize each strophe. This psalm has interesting modern historical associations. “When the Covenanters at Drumclog closed their ranks to meet the onset of Claverhouse and his dragoons, they sang the opening verses to the tune of Martyrs. A century earlier in 1588, when the first rumor of the discomfiture of the Spanish Armada reached Edinburgh and the citizens assembled to render thanks to God, Robert Bruce, addressing them, took this psalm for his text.”—*Binnie*.

“Charles Kingsley had a special love for this 76th Psalm. When sailing up the Rhine, and looking on the ruined strongholds of the old freebooters, he writes, ‘How strange that my favorite psalm about the hills of the robbers (hills of prey) should have come in course the very day I went up the Rhine!’”—*Ker*.

Read these two psalms attentively a second time, trying to enter more really into their spirit than you have ever done. Carry out into the day a choice verse in memory.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: “For neither from the east nor from the west,
Nor yet from the south cometh lifting up.
But God is Judge:
He putteth down one, and lifteth up another.”

Psa. 75:6, 7.

How fully do I recognize this truth? Do I rejoice in it? What are the reasons why one should rejoice in it?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 22: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF LATE ASSYRIAN TIMES, WITH REVIEW

1st Day: § 108. SONGS OF DELIVERANCE FROM THE ASSYRIAN

"The Bible will richly repay study, but only if the conditions are observed which common sense dictates. It has no power of working like a charm, so that a chapter read in a couple of minutes by a pre-occupied mind can do any good. The mind must rest on it and give itself time to receive impressions. It requires the whole force of our thinking and the whole force of our feeling."—*Stalker*.

The subject of the last Study is here continued. Psalms 46, 47 and 48 are the portion for today. Of the 46th Psalm Perrowne says: "This and the two following psalms are hymns of triumph, composed on the occasion of some great deliverance. I am inclined to think that they all celebrate the same event, the sudden and miraculous destruction of the army of Sennacherib under the walls of Jerusalem. . . . Such a deliverance must have filled a whole nation with wonder and joy. The old days of Moses and David would seem to have returned. The hopes of prophets, so great and so glowing, yet so often apparently defeated, seemed now nearer to their accomplishment. The times were at hand when Jerusalem should be indeed the joy of the whole earth, when all nations should acknowledge Jehovah as their king. . . . The burden, alike of prophecy and psalm, is *Immanuel, God with us*."

In the light of the above read Psalm 46.

Read Psalm 47, "a practical expansion of 46:10, 'I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.'"

Read Psalm 48, noting that the assurance for the future of 14 is based upon a record of the past, and an experience of the present (see v. 8a).

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "We have thought, O God, of thy lovingkindness." How much have I thought of it? How has it been manifested to me? How may my life more fully show forth the loving-kindness of the Lord?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 22: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF LATE ASSYRIAN TIMES, WITH REVIEW

2d Day: § 109. A SUMMARY OF ISAIAH'S PREACHING — "THE GREAT ARRAIGNMENT"

"The hope for God's future is the cheer for man's present."—*Selected.*

Recall the names of the four Principal Divisions of the Old Testament History of Abraham and his Posterity. (See RECORDS, p. xi.)

Read attentively the titles of chapters I–XIX in the Analytical Outline. What chapters are included in the first six sub-periods? With what two sub-periods are the Assyrian times coterminous? What is the number and what are the limits of the divisions of the Assyrian times (see Diagram XVIII)? By what nation and when was the Northern Kingdom destroyed? How was the power of this nation broken so that the Southern Kingdom (Judah) escaped its hand?

It is meet that in this course we give one more day to Isaiah. May one result of these Studies be a full year spent some time by each one following them, upon the book of Isaiah. We have but touched the fringe of the garment here.

Read Isaiah, chap. I, which is an introduction to, and at the same time a summary of, the entire collection of the prophet's writings.

"'The Great Arraignment' is the title appropriately suggested by Ewald for this prophecy. Jehovah is the plaintiff, Israel the defendant, the prophet a deeply interested bystander and interlocutor. Hence the prophecy naturally falls into four strophes, dividing at vv. 10, 18, 24. Str. I contains the charge with an appeal to the witnesses; II meets a preliminary objection of Israel's to a production of a charge; III offers reconciliation on condition of Israel's amendment; IV fulminates the judgment which the rejection of this gracious offer renders inevitable. The prophecy begins by addressing the whole people as equally guilty; then directs itself more especially to the higher classes; and last of all anticipates that some will be converted and so escape destruction. There is no finer specimen of prophetic oratory than this."—*Cheyne.*

Re-read the chapter in the light of the above. Memorize v. 18.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "When ye make many prayers, I will not hear: Your hands are full of blood." Is this charge in any sense applicable to me? Meditate on Isa. 1:15–18.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 22: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF LATE ASSYRIAN TIMES, WITH REVIEW

3d Day: § 110. MANASSEH AND AMON KINGS OF JUDAH

"You may depend upon it, religion is, in its essence, the most gentlemanly thing in the world. It will alone gentleize, if unmixed with cant; and I know nothing else that will alone; certainly not the army, which is thought to be the grand embellisher of manners."—*Coleridge*.

Spend one-half of the time today if necessary in reviewing the periods of the kings of Judah and Israel. Consult Diagrams XVIII, XIX, XX, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXXII, XXXV, XXXVI, XXXVII. Think through these times, locating the prophets as you may be able, and recalling the relationships, mission and character of each.

Read about the son and grandson of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 21:1-26. What expression in v. 16 reminds one of the first king of Israel? Did God leave Manasseh without witness that he was doing wrong? Read vv. 10-12. Make a catalogue of Manasseh's sins. What was the worst one? What are the names of the reformers who antedated Manasseh's time? Consult Diagram XXIII. The history of Israel seems to show a development in parallel lines of both good and evil. Each reformation is followed by more determined effort on the part of evil to undo the good. The faithful remnant is preserved and purified.

Read the account of Manasseh and Amon in 2 Chron. 33:1-25. What information additional to that given in the account in 2 Kings is here found? Does this account give evidence that after all there was no genuine reaction from the idolatry which Manasseh instituted?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "The Lord spake unto Manasseh and to his people: but they gave no heed." What was the result? Is there any message from God to which I am not giving heed?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 22: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF LATE ASSYRIAN TIMES, WITH REVIEW

4th Day: § 111. NAHUM THE PROPHET AND THE KING OF ASSYRIA

"To try too hard to make people good is one way to make them worse. The only way to make good is to be good—remembering well the beam and the mote. The time for speaking comes rarely; the time for being never departs."—*George MacDonald*.

Nahum must have prophesied after the fall of Thebes (No-amon), which occurred about 664 B. C., see 3:8. It is likely that the book which bears his name was produced some time between 660 and 640 B. C.

The style of the prophet is most graphic. "Nahum describes the fate of the vast city in images which human imagination or human language has never surpassed."—*Milman*. "In grandeur of style, in condensed energy, in elevation of sentiment and rapid transitions, and in a certain completeness of representation, Nahum stands, if not the very first, yet near the very first of the Hebrew prophets."—*B. B. Edwards*.

As regards the teaching of Nahum, Farrar says: "It is less directly spiritual than the prophecies of Hosea, Isaiah or Micah, yet it forcibly brings before us God's moral government of the world, and the duty of trust in Him as the avenger of wrong-doers, the sole source of security and peace to those who love Him."

The theme of Nahum is: Judgment upon the bloody and rapacious city and empire of Nineveh with all its gods. The book may be outlined as follows:

- I. The judgment announced, chap. 1.
- II. The judgment described, chap. 2.
- III. The judgment reviewed, with special reference to the cause of it, chap. 3.

In the light of the above, read the book of Nahum aloud if possible. Think of it as an oration as you read.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Consult Diagram XXXVIII. Think of the different circumstances of the prophecies of Jonah and Nahum and reflect upon the revelation of God made in these two little books.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 22: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF LATE ASSYRIAN TIMES, WITH REVIEW

5th Day: § 112. JOSIAH KING OF JUDAH

"Meditation, with the sense of God being present, is the most precious of all kinds of meditation. Many know well what it is to think habitually with the sense of the presence of another human mind. Religious meditation is thinking with a sense of having our judgments, our intentions and conduct reviewed by the mind of God; and the blessed result of it is that it gradually forms in our minds the habit of checking the whole tenor of our outer and inner life by considering how each thing would look in the eyes of God."—*Stalker*.

If you will work out the following properly you will be much interested and profited. Read § 112 (2 Chron.) 34:1-35:27, recording answers to the questions below as you proceed: What did Josiah do and when? Why did he act as he did?

The most noteworthy addition to the account in Chronicles found in the parallel record (2 Kings 22:1-23:30) is in 2 Kings 23:15-18. Read in connection with this 1 Kings 13:1-5.

Who co-operated with Josiah in his reformation? For answer glance over the material already read, and see Jeremiah 1:1, 2; Zephaniah 1:1. The passover was commemorated by Josiah in 622 B. C., just 100 years after the destruction of Samaria, which occurred 722 B. C. These are two dates worth remembering.

The book of the law which was read is believed to have been Deuteronomy. How often was the public reading of the book of the law required? See Deut. 31:10-13. Why was Josiah ignorant of it? See Deut. 31:26. Cf. 2 Kings 22:8. Wherein lay the weakness of Josiah's work of reformation? Wherein lay its strength? Was much of the personal influence of the king manifest in the movement.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "In the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah. In the eighteenth year he sent Shaphan to repair the house of the Lord." There is food here for reflection. Josiah made an early and right start, and progressed and was pertinacious to the end. How does my life compare with his in these things?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 22: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF LATE ASSYRIAN TIMES, WITH REVIEW

6th Day: § 113. THE PROPHET ZEPHANIAH

"The great privilege of the prophets and apostles was not their being inspired and working miracles, but their eminent holiness. The grace that was in their hearts was a thousand times more than their dignity and honor, than their miraculous gifts."—*Edwards*.

"If anyone," says a writer, "wishes all the secret oracles of all the prophets to be given in a brief compendium, let him read through this brief Zephaniah."

Zephaniah evidently prophesied early in the days of Josiah. Read Zeph. 1:1-3, and cf. Jer. 4:23-26 for the dark picture of idolatry and the announcement of judgment to come.

As you read this short book note further: (1) The frequent use of the word *day* referring to a future time of judgment for the nation; (2) The moral condition indicated by 1:12b; (3) The prominence given to sin as the cause of coming evil, 1:17 and elsewhere; (4) The urgency of the call to repentance before it should be too late, 2:1-3; (5) The mention of five different nations in chap. 2, which would be engulfed in the coming destruction; (6) The graphic picture of Nineveh laid waste, 2:13-15; (7) The charge in 3:3, 4; (8) The contrast between the rulers of earth and God, 3:5; (9) God's hope that His own people would take warning at judgments sent on others is disappointed, 3:7; (10) The assurance that a remnant will survive; (11) The bright future with which the prophet concludes his message. Contrast the gloomy opening. "Dies irae" is based on Zeph., chap. 1. What conception of God had Zephaniah? Read 3:5, 17.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Reflect upon what must have been the character of Zephaniah. As an aid to conclusions, read 1:6; 2:3; 3:4. What place does study of and reflection upon the character of God have in producing such a character as Zephaniah? Do I think enough about God as revealed in the Scriptures?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 22: KINGS AND PROPHETS OF LATE ASSYRIAN TIMES, WITH REVIEW

7th Day: § 114. THE PROPHET HABAKKUK

"One should often recall that quiet resolution of President Edwards: '*Resolved, That I will do whatsoever I think to be most for God's glory and my own good, profit and pleasure on the whole, without any consideration of the time, whether now or never so many myriads of ages hence.*' This is civil engineering that amounts to something—surveying and laying out a track through eternity."

The motto of Habakkuk might be taken from the heart of the prophecy, 2:4b. Where in the New Testament are these words found? See Rom. 1:17b; Heb. 10:38.

Habakkuk probably prophesied early in the reign of Josiah. Some hold that he uttered his message in the reign of Jehoiakim. "The design of this prophecy is to portray the sovereignty of God as chastening His people for their sins, and also visiting with deserved punishment those who as godless agents seek to destroy them. Wickedness shall not go unpunished, but woe unto those who take the rod of God into their own hands. The consoling thought as illustrated in the prophet's experience is that a good man, though deprived of all human support and stripped of his earthly possessions, may still be happy in God alone, as the bestower of higher spiritual blessings."—*Stearns.*

Read the prophecy following the outline given below:

1. The questioning of faith, chap. 1,
2. The listening of faith, see especially 2:1.
3. The waiting of faith, 2:2, 3.
4. The triumphing of faith, chap. 3, especially vv. 17-19. Note the prominence of the word salvation in the last chapter. Answer the question in 3:8 by reading 3:13.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: The character and personality of the prophet as intimately related to his message is strikingly illustrated in Habakkuk. He had real difficulty and through real travail of soul came to the knowledge of God and His will which is here presented. Reflect on 1:12, 13b, and 3:18, 19. "When your troubles become too great for prayer then begin to sing."—*Luther.*

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 23: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

1st Day: § 116. THE CALL AND THE COMMISSION OF JEREMIAH

"There is a growing need in this world that we must meet not by a contribution of money, but of self."—*Dr. Boynton.*

The following reasons may be assigned for a careful study of the book of Jeremiah: (1) It is comparatively little known; (2) The book gives more details about the life, methods and work of an Old Testament prophet than does any other; (3) It abounds in material for character study; (4) It is invaluable for its great moral lessons; (5) The period in which Jeremiah lived is one of the most important and interesting in Old Testament history.

Consult Diagram XXXIX for a general idea of the arrangement of the book of Jeremiah. Read everything in connection with the Diagram.

Read § 115, (Jer.) 1:1-10* aloud with care, making note of everything which strikes you. Did you observe: (1) "The words of Jeremiah . . . to whom the word of the Lord came"? Glance over the first page or two of the text of Jeremiah and note how often the expression, "the word of the Lord" or its equivalent occurs. We have here the true words of man, and the real Word of God; (2) give close thought to vv. 5-10. What was the message of God to Jeremiah? What objection did Jeremiah make? How did God meet it? What was Jeremiah commissioned to do?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "I have appointed thee. . . I am with thee." When may I rely without question upon God to be with me? How may I know that I am where God wishes me, and that I am doing His work?

*The re-arranged text of nearly all the book of Jeremiah will be found in the RECORDS.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 23: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

2d Day: § 116. THE CALL AND THE COMMISSION OF JEREMIAH

"I am being taught never to be disappointed but to praise."—*James Hannington*.

Re-read the reasons given in Study 23, 1st Day, for the study of Jeremiah; afterwards consider the following additional ones: (6) The history of Jeremiah bears a closer analogy to that of Jesus than that of any other prophet of the Old Testament; (7) "So far as we have data for a judgment Jeremiah was the healthiest, strongest, bravest, grandest man of Old Testament history."—*Ballantine*.

Read Jer. 1:11, 12. Which is expressed here, the content or the certainty of God's revelation? Note the marginal readings for indication of paronomasia in the original. Introduce the sounds given in the margin as you read aloud vv. 12, 13. Attempting to reproduce the force of the play on words into the English it would be: "I see the rod of an early awake.... I am early awake in respect to my word to perform it."

Read Jer. 1:13-16. Consider the force of the figure. A flood is often used to describe destruction. Think of what a boiling flood would mean.

Read Jer. 1:17-19. Reflect upon the expressions, "defenced city," "iron pillar," "brasen walls" (v. 18), in the light of Jeremiah's confession in v. 6. Read Isa. 41:14, 15, getting the contrast between "worm" and "new, sharp threshing instrument having teeth." But was Jeremiah's work to be aggressive or defensive? Which is the more difficult? Reflect further on the expressions in v. 18.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "A defenced city."—How much resistance of sin am I good for?

"An iron pillar."—How much iron have I in my spiritual life?

"Brasen walls."—How much patient endurance do I possess?

How may I have all these things? Read v. 19b.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 23: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

3d Day: § 115. THE KINGS OF JUDAH IN JEREMIAH'S TIME

"The longer I live, the more am I certain that the great difference between men—between the feeble and the powerful, the great and the insignificant—is energy, invincible determination, a purpose once fixed on, then death or victory. This quality will do anything that can be done in the world; and no talents, no circumstances, no opportunities, will make a two-legged creature a man without it."—*Sir Thomas Fowell Bulton.*

Seek to get today a clearer view than you now possess, of the political and religious situation in Jeremiah's day. To this end read again Jer. 1:1-3.

Draw a line across a sheet of paper, assigning the first part of it to Josiah, the second part to Jehoiakim, and the third part to Zedekiah. Make a note on the portion assigned to Josiah that Jeremiah began to prophesy in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign. Turn now to 2 Kings, 22d chapter. Read vv. 1-3, making note of times mentioned. Read also 23:23, 31-36; 24:8, 18-20; 25:1. Consult Diagrams XL-XLIII. Read now as much of 2 Chron. 34:1-36:23 as you have time for, thinking all the while of the time of Jeremiah's call to the prophetic office and trying to imagine what he must have said and done. Do this with especial care in connection with the events of Josiah's reign. Who doubtless largely influenced Jeremiah in early life? Did he likely figure prominently in the reform measures of Josiah?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "While he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David." Think for a moment of the character of the God of David. What is it to seek after God? How may I more truly seek after God? What are some results of seeking after God?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 23: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

4th Day: § 415. THE KINGS OF JUDAH IN JEREMIAH'S TIME

"Here is a man who is manifestly sustained as well as guided by influences from heaven. The Holy Spirit dwells in him. God speaks through him. The heroism, the nobility, the pure and stainless enthusiasm at the root of his life come, beyond question, from Christ. There must, therefore, be a Christ; and it is worth while to have such a helper and redeemer as this Christ undoubtedly is, and as He here reveals Himself in this wonderful disciple."—*Stanley on Livingstone*.

Give this day chiefly to getting still more clearly in mind the political and religious situation in which Jeremiah wrought. Read again Jer. 1:1-3. Glance again at Diagrams XL-XLIII. Spend three to five minutes in review of 2 Chron. 34:1-36:23, the portion which you read yesterday. Give the remainder of today's time to new material in 2 Kings 22:1-25:30, all the while keeping before you the prophet Jeremiah as you read, and trying to imagine how he acted and what he said. See how much of his career you can forecast. Read Jer. 1:17-19.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Ah, Lord God! Behold I cannot speak: for I am a child.... Say not I am a child.... I have appointed thee.... I am with thee." What was the secret of Jeremiah's success as so far indicated? Think down into this. Am I distrustful of self? Am I trustful of God? Do I act upon His word?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 23: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

5th Day: § 117. THE SUBSTANCE OF JEREMIAH'S MESSAGE DURING THE REIGN OF JOSIAH

"The first thing that a human being should recognize about himself is that his character is his distinguishing feature. It is not the amount of money, the amount of power, the amount of brains that a man has that is his distinguishing feature, but his character. In God's sight men are what they are in their wishes and ambitions. The supreme ambition of every one should be to be worthy in character."—*Selected.*

The book of Jeremiah is thought of by many as the backsliding book. This is a mistake. Practically all there is in the book about backsliding is found in the 2d and 3rd chapters. Keep prominent in your mind today the moral and religious condition of Judah in Jeremiah's time. Note down any striking statements about this as you proceed. Study this subject in the light of the character of God as set forth in this passage. At once read Jer. 2:5, 6, 13, 31; 3:12-14, for definite statements about God. Read now chaps. 2d and 3rd of Jer., not pausing for definite understandings of what may at first be obscure, but reading for the general impression of the moral and religious situation which the chapters will give you,

If time remains,* go over the material and answer the following question: (1) Where was the prophet directed to go to preach? (2) To what past experience was he directed to refer? (3) To what does God challenge His people respecting His past treatment of them? (4) What classes of persons are mentioned as responsible for the present state? (5) What contrast is cited between Israel and the heathen nations?

Jer. 2:17, 19; 3:23, should be put on your list of passages to be memorized. Correct the usual wrong interpretation of Ps. 121:1 by Jer. 3:23.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Reflect on 2:17, 19. Recognizing now more clearly the fact that sin pays in bitterness, what shall be my policy toward it today.

*The student should not hurry in order to finish the work of any day. Time should not be lost, but a good way to lose time is to hurry. Work to the limit of your time; then quit and do not regret your inability to finish. The last work done each day should of course be on the Personal Thought.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 23: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

6th Day: § 117. THE SUBSTANCE OF JEREMIAH'S MESSAGE DURING THE REIGN OF JOSIAH

"To understand Jeremiah implies such a profound insight into human character, into the lessons of the past and the facts of the present, into the religious history of the race and the perils of today, as our happy circumstances and prosperous material civilization with difficulty allow. To understand Jeremiah is to understand the world's need of Christ."—*Ballantine*.

Chapters 4-6 might be called "The Immediate Danger Chapters." They are most graphic. Read aloud today if possible. Put yourself as really as you can in the prophet's place.

On the fourth chap. answer the following questions: (1) What is stated in v. 4 as the cause of evil to come? (2) What is the character of the foe as described in vv. 5, 12, 13? (3) Is weakness of character indicated in the prophet by v. 19? (4) What is the saving clause in vv. 23-28? (5) What modern poem do these verses suggest?

On the 5th chap. answer: (1) What do vv. 7-9 indicate as to the condition of the people and the character of God? (2) What is the force of the comparison in vv. 22, 23? (3) Imagine the situation described in vv. 26-31.

If unable to read chap. 6 as a whole, read vv. 10-15. Re-read the quotation from Ballantine above.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Read Jer. 6:16. Am I in danger of accepting popular ways instead of right ways? What place has the character of people who are in a way, in aiding me to determine whether that way is a right one or not?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 23: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

7th Day: § 117. THE SUBSTANCE OF JEREMIAH'S MESSAGE DURING THE REIGN OF JOSIAH

"It is not what we take up, but what we give up, that makes us rich."
—*H. W. Beecher.*

The chapters for today are Jer. 11th and 12th. The reference to the covenant in chap. 11 favors assigning this portion to the reign of Josiah and associating it with the reformation of Josiah. From Jer. 1:1 we learn that his home was at Anathoth, a little town about three miles from Jerusalem. The latter part of chap. 11 will be more interesting if we note that the conspiracy to kill the prophet was made in his home town.

Read now without interruption chap. 11. Afterwards read the prayer in 12:1-4. Note that the prophet though perplexed does not doubt God, v. 1. What was the prophet's difficulty? To whom did he go with it? This difficulty was real and great. The language of vv. 5, 6, means what? It indicates that greater suffering awaits the prophet. Had Jeremiah for the moment forgotten the promises which God had made when He called him to the work of a prophet? Read Jer. 1:19. Is there not a clear indication that the turning of Jeremiah from a child into an iron pillar and brazen walls was a process, and that he was to be made perfect through suffering? Read Jer. 12:7-17.

Keep in mind in your further study of Jeremiah that his natural temperament was such that in order to perform the work required of him, he passed through the most intense anguish of spirit. Was the wisdom of God manifest in this? Could a man of different temperament have done the work to which Jeremiah was called? Would the wicked kings and people have listened to announcements of coming judgments from other than tear-filled eyes?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: When I am in difficulty to whom do I go? How heartily can I preface every investigation of a moral problem by the words, "Righteous art Thou, O Lord"? In whom only is a satisfactory answer to some questions to be found?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 24: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

1st Day: §.118. THE ARREST OF JEREMIAH FOR PREACHING IN THE TEMPLE COURT

"Measure thy life by loss and not by gain,
Not by the wine drunk, but by the wine poured forth;
For love's strength standeth in love's sacrifice,
And he who suffers most has most to give."

With pencil in hand read § 118, (Jer.) 26:1-24, taking care to allow the words to bring most vividly before you the scene described. Picture the prophet standing in the court of the Lord's house; listen to his words; look into the faces of his auditors; read their thoughts.

Go over the material again and note: (1) V. 2 indicates that the prophet took advantage of some feast day when many people would hear him; (2) Vv. 3, 13 indicate the condition on which God can forgive. In the instances where He is represented as repenting, His unchangeableness is clearly manifest; (3) The prophets mentioned in v. 7 were false prophets; (4) Not all that Jeremiah said on this occasion is here reported. Tomorrow we shall study a fuller report; (5) Imagine the tumult occasioned by the question in v. 9; (6) Reflect upon the character of the man who under the circumstances could utter the words of vv. 12-15; (7) In connection with vv. 18, 19 read Micah 3:12; (8) The account of Uriah given in vv. 20-23 is likely inserted here to show in what peril Jeremiah was at the time. Considering the character of the opposition and of the king himself, it was little short of a miracle that the prophet escaped death.

Reflect further on the character of Jeremiah as manifested in vv. 12-15, recalling as you do the prophet's own estimate of himself and the figures given to represent him when strengthened by God. Was there not in Jeremiah a rare combination of gentleness and fidelity?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Speak. . . all the words that I command thee; . . . keep not back a word." How fully dominant is the will of God in my silences as well as in my speaking? What may I learn from Jeremiah respecting the manner of speaking God's truth?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 24: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

2d Day: § 119. THE MESSAGE OF JEREMIAH FOR WHICH HE WAS ARRESTED

“It is well to think well; it is divine to act well.”—*Horace Mann*.

The importance of reading these chapters with the historical situation vividly in mind cannot be overestimated. Read Jer. 7:2-4. Where was Jeremiah when he spoke? What gesture would he likely make as he uttered the words of v. 4? What would be his tone of voice?

Use your own judgment in the use of your time today on the passage (Jer. 7:1-10:25), taking care not to feel that you must cover the entire section, and reserving two or three minutes for the quotation below, and the Personal Thought. In reading the section the following outline may be helpful: (1) Rebuke for shameless idolatry and pollution of the very temple, 7:1-8:3; (2) Announcement of punishment, 8:4-9:22; (3) Reasoning on the folly of idolatry and exhortation to follow the only true God, 9:23-10:25.

“It is difficult to conceive any situation more painful than that of a great man condemned to watch the lingering agony of an exhausted country, to tend it during the alternate fits of stupefaction and raving which precede its dissolution, and to see the symptoms of vitality disappear one by one, till nothing is left but coldness, darkness and corruption.”
—*Lord Macaulay*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: “This house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust” (7:14). How sure am I that my religion is not a formal thing; a trusting in a place or a book, or a set of relationships? In what does true religion consist? Read 9:23, 24.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 24: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

3d Day: § 120. JEREMIAH AS AN INTERCESSOR

"Remember you are not a tree, that can live or stand alone. You are only a branch. It is only while you abide in Christ, as the branch in the vine, that you will flourish, or even live."—*McCheyne*.

The passage for today is packed with tragic interest. It is not too long for you to read comfortably in the time, only take good care to enter as fully as possible into the spirit of the prophet. Intense suffering on the part of the prophet is here portrayed. First of all read his prayers in 14:7-9, 19-22; his lament in 15:10, 11; and his prayer and God's answer in 15:15-21. Is there any indication that he was tempted to give up? What evidence of growth in Jeremiah's character does this passage give?

Read now the entire section (14:1-15:21).

"So far as we have data for a judgment, Jeremiah was the healthiest, strongest, bravest, grandest man of the Old Testament history. There is not a scrap of evidence that he was otherwise than naturally ardent, hopeful, buoyant, with a soul as full of song as a bird's, and as receptive and radiant of light as a diamond. Every reserve which we make in estimating his temperament is a gratuitous subtraction from the tragic objective truth of history. It is only when we admit what the fall of Judah meant to one so clear-eyed, so healthful, so elastic as Jeremiah that we begin to see how dreadful that fall really was."—*Ballantine*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Read again thoughtfully 15:19, 20, as an answer to the questions in v. 18b, and test your own life by these words of truth. Have the words, "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth," any present application to me?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 24: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

4th Day: § 121. THE PROPHET REMAINING UNMARRIED

§ 122. VARIOUS MESSAGES OF WARNING

"If any work is really God-given, and He puts it either into our hearts to devise, or into the power of our hands to do, no fear but He will also provide stuff sufficient, whether metal or mental."—*F. R. Havergal*.

Read Jer., chap. 16, answering the following questions: (1) Why is the prophet forbidden to marry? (2) Why is he forbidden to enter the house of mourning? (3) Why is he forbidden to enter the house of feasting? (4) What did the people answer Jeremiah when he told them these things? (5) What answer was he directed to give them? (6) Who were worse, the people of Jeremiah's time or their fathers? (7) What, in v. 15, is assumed as having taken place? (8) What figures in v. 16 are employed to represent the enemy? (9) What will the nations learn from God's treatment of Israel? (10) What will Israel learn from God's treatment of her?

What verses in chap. 17 resemble a part of the first Psalm? Read vv. 9 and 10 of chap. 17 together. Who knows the heart? Read 1 John 3:19, 20. What do we learn of the character and mission of Jeremiah from 17:12-18? What is the message about the Sabbath in 17:19-27? Why do you think the Sabbath is here made a test?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Thinking of Jeremiah as revealed in today's chapter, ask yourself the following questions: What personal sacrifices am I making for the sake of the Kingdom of God? To what extent am I willing to be misunderstood for Christ's sake?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 24: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

5th Day: § 123. THE POTTER'S HOUSE VISITED AND THE LESSON
§ 124. THE POTTER'S VESSEL AND THE LESSON

"I never was happy until I gave up trying to be a great man and was willing to be nobody."—*Edward Payson*.

Read chap. 18, answering the following: (1) To whose house was the prophet directed to go? (2) What did the potter do when the clay was marred? (3) What application of this was made to Israel? (4) What does God say He will do when a nation repents of its wrong doing? (5) What does God say He will do when a nation refuses to do His will? (6) Does the passage indicate that God's treatment of man is arbitrary? (7) What stage in sin is indicated by v. 12? (8) Who were the leaders against Jeremiah? (9) What was the animus of the opposition? (10) Is the prayer of vv. 19-23 vindictive? In judging of this must we not take into consideration the character of Jeremiah? Should we judge his character by the words, or the words by his character?

Read chap. 19 and answer the following: (1) What was the prophet directed to say? (2) Whom was he to take with him? (3) Where was he to go? (4) What was he to do with the bottle? (5) What application was he to make of this action?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: The potter deals with the clay according to its nature. So does God deal with us. He takes into account our nature, as free and responsible agents. He does not deal arbitrarily with us, although He does deal sovereignly, for in making us He hath made us thus free and responsible. How am I using my freedom? How am I meeting my high responsibility to God?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 24: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

6th Day: § 125. JEREMIAH SMITTEN AND IMPRISONED BY PASHHUR THE PRIEST

§ 126. WINE OFFERED BY THE PROPHET TO THE RECHABITES

"No need is greater in this increasingly noisy world, than the need of knowing what we want. This is a matter genuinely subject to inspiration, and the last thing to be taken for granted; yet nothing is supposed to be so settled, so axiomatic, as that a man knows what he wants."—*Trumbull*.

Read chap. 20 and answer the following questions: (1) Who was Pashhur? (2) What did he do to Jeremiah? (3) Why this treatment? (4) How long did Jeremiah remain in the stocks? (5) What name did Jeremiah give to Pashhur? (6) Why this name? (7) What country is here specifically mentioned as the captor of Judah? (8) When the prophet would refrain from speaking God's word, what occurred? (9) Was the prophet utterly cast down, or did his trials develop faith in God? (10) What do the last verses of this chapter indicate as to the suffering of the prophet in accomplishing his work?

Read Jer. 35:1-19 and answer the following questions: (1) In whose reign did this occur? (2) Why were the Rechabites in Jerusalem (v. 11)? (3) Why did the Rechabites refuse to drink wine? (4) What is emphasized in the contrast between "their father" and "me" in v. 16? (5) What was the message of God by Jeremiah to the Rechabites?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Dwell further on the contrast between the Rechabites in their respect for the single commandment of their father, and God's people in their rejection of His oft-repeated appeals, as brought out in 35:14-16. What characteristic of God is here emphasized? How fully have I come to appreciate the patience of God?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 24: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

7th Day: § 127. THE ROLL CUT AND BURNED BY JEHOIAKIM
§ 128. THE MESSAGE OF JEREMIAH TO BARUCH

"Jeremiah is the most misunderstood of all the great men of history. To be one of the healthiest of men and to be thought morbid, to be one of the strongest and to be thought weak, to be one of the bravest and to be thought faint-hearted, to be a titan and to be thought a pygmy, has been his hard fortune." *First sentence in: A Character Study by Dr. Ballantine*, which should be read by all.

The time in which the events we now study occurred, was a crisis time for Jeremiah, and not for Jeremiah only, but for his generation and for the world. "Politically the 4th year of Jehoiakim, in which Nebuchadnezzar won his great victory over Pharaoh-necho at Carchemish on the Euphrates, was the turning-point of the age."

Read Jer. 46:1-28. Read §127, (Jer.) 36:1-32.

"This narrative throws important light upon a prophet's mode of working. There was a long period of oral teaching, during which he committed nothing to writing; and obviously it can only have been a condensed summary of that teaching which was embodied in the roll. Doubtless it represented faithfully the sum and substance of the message which he had been commissioned to deliver; but it can scarcely have repeated the *ipsissima verba* of discourses spread over a period of more than twenty years. It is interesting to observe the instrumentality of the faithful disciple Baruch, acting as the prophet's amanuensis, as Tertius did for St. Paul (Rom. 16:22). And further, it is to be noted that the first form of this collection of prophecies was not its final form. Much was added when it was rewritten."—*Kirkpatrick*.

Read §128, (Jer.) 45:1-5.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Am I like Baruch seeking great things for myself? What is the great thing which I should first of all seek? Matt. 6:33. Am I really doing this?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 25: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

1st Day: §129. PROPHECIES AGAINST JUDAH AND THE NATIONS

"The day returns and brings the petty round of irritating concerns and duties. Help us to play the man, help us to perform them with laughter and kind faces; let cheerfulness abound with industry. Give us to go blithely on our business all this day, bring us to our resting beds weary and content and undishonored, and grant us in the end the gift of sleep."—*Robert Louis Stevenson*.

Read over the titles of the twenty-six chapters of the Analytical Outline, noting their distribution under the four General Divisions of the Old Testament History of Abraham and his Posterity.

Read over the titles of the Thirty Studies in Old Testament Characters.

Read over the titles of Sections 115-140.

Spend a few minutes in reviewing Diagrams XXXIX-XLIII.

Read § 129, (Jer.) 25:1-38 without interruption. Afterwards go over the material and answer the following questions: (1) In what year of whose reign did the message come? (2) How long had Jeremiah prophesied and with what results? (3) What king of Babylon would take the people captive? (4) What special title is here given to him? (5) How long would the bondage continue? (6) How would God treat Babylon? (7) What reason is assigned for such treatment? (8) What is the prophet directed to do in connection with his announcement of evil upon the nations? (9) How are the nations assured that the evil announced will come (vv. 28, 29)? (10) By what figure is the Lord represented in the latter part of the chapter?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them." What has been my response to the messages which God has sent to me? Is there any message now ringing in my ears? What answer shall I give?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 25: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

2d Day: § 130. THE LINEN GIRDLE AND ITS MESSAGE

§ 131. THE KINGS AND THE FALSE PROPHETS ARRAIGNED

"Only he who lives a life of his own can help the lives of other men."
—*Phillips Brooks*.

Review Diagrams I-III.

Read § 130, (Jer.) 13:1-27. The application is sufficiently plain. There is a theory that "Euphrates" should be "Phrath," which is equivalent to Ephrath or Bethlehem. It is better, however, to believe that Jeremiah was absent from Judah during a part of the reign of Jehoiakim, and that the Euphrates is here referred to. Is the feeling of the prophet indicated in v. 17 to be understood as representing God's reluctance to punish? Is not the "weeping prophet" an interpreter of the divine compassion? Note the real application of the words, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" by reading the whole of v. 23. What is emphasized at the close of the chapter as the cause of Israel's suffering?

As you read § 131, (Jer.) 22:1-30, consult Diagrams XLI, XLII, and note: (1) Four of the five kings of Judah who reigned during Jeremiah's lifetime are here mentioned, see vv. 11, 18, 24; (2) The chapter may be broken up as follows: vv. 1-9 contain general exhortation mingled with threats and promises directed to the king of Judah; vv. 10-12 refer to Jehoahaz; vv. 13-19 are about Jehoakim; and the remainder of the chapter refers to Jehoiachin the son of Jehoiakim. Review the story of these kings given in 2 Chron. 34:1-36:10.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." Read the whole of Jer. 13:23. Am I the slave of any evil habit? Can I deliver myself? How may I secure the mastery? Read 2 Cor. 9:8.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 25: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

3d Day: § 131. THE KINGS AND THE FALSE PROPHETS OF THE NATION ARRAIGNED

"I sometimes think that this is the peculiar sin of the present age—the attempt to make up for lack of character by outside service. It can never be done. It is zeal without knowledge."—*Campbell Morgan*.

Read § 131, (Jer.) 23:1-8. Who are referred to by the sheep? Who are referred to by the shepherds? What are the names given here to the future ideal ruler?

Read Jer. 23:9-14. What is the character of the prophets and priests here described? The remainder of chap. 23 treats of false prophets. It will stand careful, thoughtful reading. See quotation from Wilberforce in Study 17, 3d Day. With v. 17 read 6:14. These false prophets never dreamed of giving a message such as v. 19 contains. Vv. 33-40 contain a most interesting play upon the expression, "the burden of the Lord." This expression of the true prophets had been so misappropriated by the false prophets that its use was entirely forbidden.

Read Matt. 7:15-23; also 1 John 4:1-6.

"What is the straw to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as fire? saith the Lord; and like the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Jer. 23:28b, 29.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "If they had stood in my council, then had they caused my people to hear my words." Jer. 23:22. How may I discern who is a true prophet? What is it to stand in the council of God? What place has the Bible in enabling one to stand in the council of God? What place the Holy Spirit? Am I standing in the council of the Lord?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 25: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

- 4th Day: § 132. THE VISION OF THE BASKETS OF FIGS
§ 133. THE SYMBOLIC YOKES AND BANDS

"Neither Moses, nor Joshua, nor Samuel, nor Elijah, nor Paul, was ever subjected to a tithe of what Jeremiah endured. As a sufferer he stands next to our Lord Himself. Why should we attribute his distress to morbid predisposition to melancholy? If he shrank from the stern task assigned him, Moses and Isaiah had done the same. If he yielded to discouragement in defeat, Joshua had done the same. If he longed for a lodge in the wilderness, the bold Elijah had sought the same. If he cursed the day of his birth, Job, the great example of patience, had done the same. If he wept over Jerusalem, so did our Lord. That Jeremiah preserved the sweetness of his affections, and the loyalty of his piety, and the boldness of his official testimony to the end, argues rather a pre-eminently ardent, high spirited, heroic nature."—*Ballantine*.

Read § 132, (Jer.) 24:1-10. Consult Diagram XLIII, and read v. 1 again for the historical situation. There was a strong party which believed that the people already taken to Babylon would be restored, and that Zedekiah and the remnant would not be taken into captivity. What was Jeremiah's belief? Was he truly patriotic in this? Read vv. 6, 7. What in Babylon was favorable for producing such results? Was not Babylon the headquarters of idolatry? Which is worse, to be among pure heathen, or to be among heathenish professors of truth?

Read § 133, (Jer.) 27:1-11. In whose reign did this message come to Jeremiah? For answer, note marginal rendering of v. 1. What was the prophet directed to put on his neck? To whom and by whom was he to send the yokes? What message were these yokes to emphasize? Who delivered a different message?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: God spake in prophets by divers portions and in divers manners. God hath spoken in His Son. How shall I escape if I neglect the message? Do I thoroughly believe that God has spoken? Am I heeding His message to me? Reflect on the opening verses of Hebrews, chaps. 1 and 2.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 25: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

5th Day: § 134. JEREMIAH'S CONFLICT WITH FALSE PROPHETS IN
JUDEA

"Give what thou commandest and command what thou wilt."—
Augustine.

Do not fail to grasp clearly the political situation and the stand which Jeremiah took in relation to it. We have now reached the reign of Zedekiah, the last of the kings of Judah. Josiah his father was a probable vassal of Assyria. At any rate he met his death in an attempt to prevent a march of the king of Egypt against Assyria. Josiah's son Jehoahaz, who succeeded to the throne, was taken captive by Pharaoh after a three months reign. Jehoiaikim was a vassal of Pharaoh, and was made captive by Babylon. In the 4th year of his reign Nebuchadnezzar won the famous battle at Carchemish and thereby became master of the West. Jeremiah advised submission to Nebuchadnezzar. The false prophets sided with the kings and advised resistance to Babylon, judging that by the aid of Egypt they would be able to succeed.

Read § 134, (Jer.) 27:12-22. Whom did Jeremiah warn against heeding the false prophets? What was the message of the false prophets about the vessels of the house of the Lord? What test does Jeremiah submit to the false prophets? In what captivity had part of the vessels already been taken?

Read § 134, (Jer.) 28:1-17. This passage is most instructive in its picture of Jeremiah dealing with a false prophet. Study the answer of Jeremiah in vv. 6-9, and in his action as recorded in v. 11b. What do these indicate respecting his character and trust in God?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Reflect further on the tests of a true message submitted by Jeremiah in 28:7-9. The old prophets are appealed to. A true message must agree with them. Then any man who cries "Peace, peace" to a man or a nation pursuing a wicked course may be judged false. Am I dealing truly with myself? with others?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 25: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

6th Day: § 135. JEREMIAH'S CONFLICT WITH FALSE PROPHETS IN BABYLON

"Circumstances do not change one; they simply develop what is in one."—*Selected.*

Get the situation clearly before you before reading Jer., c. 29. Recall the parable of the baskets of figs, c. 24. Zedekiah and the remnant at Jerusalem were represented by the bad figs. The good figs represented those to whom Jeremiah wrote. Remember that Ezekiel and Daniel were among the captives. Jeremiah is here truly a prophet to the nations. He had warned the kings round about against false prophets, see 27:3, 9; he had warned Zedekiah at home; he now by letter warns the exiles.

Read 29:1-32. The chapter is full of interest. There is no need of comment upon it.

Memorize v. 13. Attention might here be called to a number of familiar and valuable verses found in the book of Jeremiah. Read the following: 1:19; 2:17, 19, 22; 6:14; 8:20; 8:22; 13:23; 17:9; 23:29; 29:13; 31:34.

Of the foreshadowings of Christ in the days of Jeremiah, Dr. G. S. Goodspeed writes: "Jeremiah himself in the manifold experience and wonderful development of his personal and public character is after all the most striking foreshadowing. He carried Israel and Jehovah in his own heart. The one was broken and revived in him. The other revealed His love and power through him. There was the nation in the individual. There was the communion of God and man, the suffering, the redemption, the restoration which were accomplished within,—the prophecy and assurance of the sorrow and triumph of the cross."

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Have I found God in reality? What is it to search for God with all the heart?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 25: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

7th Day: § 136. THE MESSAGE ABOUT BABYLON

"It is sound opinion, not multitudinous opinion, that takes the force of law. Have faith in truth, never in numbers. The great surge of numbers rolls up noisily and imposingly, but flats out on the shore and slides back into the mud of oblivion. But a true opinion is the ocean itself, calm in its rest, eternal in its power. The storms and tumultuous thunders of popular rage and bigoted wrong will sometimes pause in their travel round this sphere and listen to its powerful voice. And if the night comes down to veil it for a time, it is still there beating on with the same victorious pulse and waiting for the day. A right opinion cannot die, for its life is in the moral element, which is the life of God. Have patience, and it shall come to pass in due time that what you rested in the tranquility of reason has been crowned with the majesty of law."—*Horace Bushnell on the Moral Tendencies and Results of Human History.*

Give your time today to reading such portions of § 136, (Jer.) 50:1-51:64 as you may elect. The whole of the material may be collected in thought about the two propositions: Babylon shall be destroyed; Israel shall be delivered. Try to enter into the spirit of the description as you read. Read aloud if possible.

Re-read the words of Bushnell above.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I watch over my word to perform it." How fully do I rest in the assurance that no word of God shall be void of power? What is the reason if I have not this assurance?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 26: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

1st Day: § 137. "THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION", INCLUDING THE ACCOUNT OF THE PURCHASE OF THE FIELD

"In the deepest darkness of that age of declension which sealed the fate of an ancient Israel, when the true prophet could no longer see any other end to the degenerate nation than a consuming judgment, the voice of spiritual faith rises high above all the limits of the dispensation that was to pass away, and sets forth the sum of true religion in words that can never die."—*Robertson Smith*.

Chapters 30-33 of Jeremiah have been called "The Book of Consolation." It is the bright part of the book of Jeremiah. The heart of these chapters is in 31:31-34, where we read about the New Covenant. Read the verses and note three things: (1) The law will be written on the heart; (2) There will be individual, personal knowledge of God; (3) There will be forgiveness of sin.

Study today the story of the purchase of the field and the prayer which followed. Read Jer. 32:1-25. Under what circumstances did the message here recorded come to Jeremiah? Why had he been imprisoned? Who offered the field for purchase? At whose suggestion did Jeremiah purchase it? What care did he exercise to have the purchase known and secured? What did he do after the purchase (v. 16)? What prompted this prayer? What is a striking characteristic of this prayer? Is there much of petition in it?

The answer of God is found in the remainder of the chapter, vv. 26-44. Vv. 26-35 contain the first part of the answer; vv. 36-44 the second part. In connection with the burning of Jerusalem (v. 29) read Deut. 13:12-16. After reading vv. 28-35, return to vv. 26, 27, and after re-reading them (noticing as you do the last expression in v. 18), read vv. 36-44, where an explanation of the purchase of the field is given.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Now after I had delivered the deed... I prayed." Do I perform clear duty even if I do not understand, going to God afterward for explanation?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 26: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

2d Day: § 137. "THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION", INCLUDING THE ACCOUNT OF THE PURCHASE OF THE FIELD

"Superficially regarded, the reformation of Josiah seemed to promise a future of divine blessing to the land. But the true prophet could not be deceived by a superficial improvement that made no change in the inward disposition of the people; and under the kings Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, he repeated with increasing definiteness his testimony to the impending destruction of the whole commonwealth. All vain hopes, especially excited and fed by false prophets, he inexorably denounced . . . In opposition to all unholy confidence in the outward form of the theocracy and its means of grace, Jeremiah proclaimed that man can only attain salvation through a complete change of mind, and that only in virtue of His forgiving mercy, by a complete remoulding of His relation to His people, can the Lord realize the true purpose that He has always had in view for them . . . Just in the later saddest time, when the judgment, as he knew, was going on its way unhindered, and he himself had to undergo the most painful martyrdom, under the reign of Zedekiah, Jeremiah was often raised to the ideal height of the glorious future, of which formerly he was permitted to speak but seldom."—*Orelli*.

Read as much of chaps. 30, 31, 33 as your time will permit, entering as heartily as possible into the times and the spirit of the prophet. If you omit any part, let it be chap. 31.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and will show thee great things and difficult, which thou knowest not." Jer. 33:3. "I bow my knees unto the Father . . . to the end that ye . . . may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Eph. 3:14-19. How fully do I recognize and act upon the fact that spiritual things are spiritually, not intellectually, discerned?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 26: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

3d Day: § 138. THE LAST DAYS AND THE CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM

"Jeremiah was a patriot whose duty it was to discourage national hopes and counsel submission to a foreign foe. Though a patriot he seemed to his fellow-citizens a traitor, without faith in his country or sympathy for her defenders."—*Ballantine*.

Read § 138, (Jer.) 21:1, 2. It would seem that Zedekiah hoped for some miraculous deliverance similar to that of Hezekiah from Sennacherib. Read 21:3-10 for Jeremiah's advice to the king and the people. In connection with v. 7, read 52:11, and Ezek. 12:13.

Before reading 34:8-22, read 37:5-10. This passage gives the occasion of the re-enslavement of the servants. Read now 34:8-22.

Read 37:1-21, and estimate the character of Zedekiah. What traits does Jeremiah here display?

"Let us compare Jeremiah with Samuel. Samuel mourned for Saul as Jeremiah did for king Josiah. But it was Samuel's privilege to anoint David, a man after God's own heart, and to lay the foundation for a far more splendid kingdom. How slight the sorrows of Samuel, how large his encouragements, compared with those of Jeremiah! During the twenty-two years that intervened between the death of Josiah and the final catastrophe, three of his sons and one grandson successfully disgraced the throne. Set up and pulled down by foreign conquerors, each was finally carried away to die in captivity, except Jehoiachim, who was murdered and cast forth with the burial of an ass. Each of these weaklings during his brief abuse of power had time enough to demonstrate his incapacity, duplicity, vanity, obstinacy, rapacity and impiety. As the full strong current of the Nile or the Mississippi, nearing the ocean, slackens and divides across the mud flats of a delta, so the royal dynasty of David at the end was lost in these contemptible branches. Through all the slow, heart-breaking steps of this political decadence Jeremiah went down with his nation into its grave."—*Ballantine*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Read and reflect on Jer. 1:17-19 in the light of the situation described in today's portion. How much iron is there in my blood? How great is my patience? How long would I keep sweet under such trials as Jeremiah had?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 26: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

4th Day: § 138. THE LAST DAYS AND THE CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM

"Compare Jeremiah with Elijah, who is thought to have been the boldest of the prophets . . . He fled . . . To him it was revealed that circumstances were not so bad as they seemed . . . What Elijah mistakenly supposed to be his own lot was really the lot of Jeremiah. Still Jeremiah was not permitted to flee away. Firm at his post where Elijah had not the courage to stand, Jeremiah stood to the bitter end.

"Compare Jeremiah with Paul. Paul wrote: 'I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart', but this was only a part of Paul's experience. He had the privilege of going far away from unready Jerusalem to do a work of magnificent constructiveness among Gentiles, where multitudes of converts became his joy and his crown. Jeremiah, through his long ministry, had only the great sorrow and unceasing pain in his heart, and nothing more. His duty was to stay year after year in Jerusalem, rejected, threatened, set in stocks, cast into the miry dungeon, repeating over and over a fearful message to unwilling ears, with never the joy of a single success."—*Ballantine*.

Read § 138, (Jer.) 38:1-39:18. These chapters are full of dramatic interest. Do not fail to enter fully into the scenes described. Study the characters of Zedekiah, Ebed-melech, and Jeremiah as you proceed.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord, in that which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well with thee, and thy soul shall live." Jer. 38:20. What must be in the character of a man to enable him to address a fellow-man thus? Note: "I beseech thee," "the voice of the Lord in that which I speak," "it shall be." What of these elements do I possess?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 26: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

5th Day: § 139. JEREMIAH AND THE REMNANT IN JUDEA

"Let us contemplate for a little this grand figure standing there in the solitude of its grief over the ruins of the noblest experiment of ancient times. There he stands, comparing the divine ideal of a visible kingdom of God on earth with the reality, comparing the possibilities and hopes of the past with the facts of the present and the certainties of the future. In him we see the dignity of unselfish grief. In him we see the manliness of tears. Looking at him, we see that the broadest, truest, strongest, bravest, may for that very reason be the saddest. . . . Jeremiah's mood was justified by the facts. It was necessitated to a healthy, clear-eyed nature by the situation. For there was no bright side to those facts to look upon. To have felt otherwise than Jeremiah did would have argued a little or a frivolous mind, unable or unwilling to see and feel the truth."—*Ballantine*.

Today read the story of the Remnant in Judea found in § 139, (Jer.) 40:1-42:22, dwelling longest on 42d chapter. Note there the relation of prayer to the communication of God's message to the prophet; the delay of ten days; and the evidence in the reply that Jeremiah realized that the request for direction had not been made in good faith.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "For ye have dealt deceitfully against your own souls; for ye sent me to pray unto the Lord your God . . . but ye have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God in anything for the which He hath sent me unto you." What is the relation between prayer and obedience? What evidence have I that I am not dealing deceitfully against my own soul in the matter of prayer? How often do I obey when the direction is not according to my taste?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 26: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

6th Day: § 140. JEREMIAH AND THE REMNANT IN EGYPT

"Looking at Jeremiah and pondering the lessons of his tears, we begin to suspect that our unreadiness to understand him, may come from the influence on our mind of the popular fallacies which pervade the literature of the day. In his presence the hollowness of these fallacies becomes more than ever apparent. Here are some of them:

"First Fallacy: 'That one should always look on the bright side.'

"Second Fallacy: 'That all things are for the best.'

"Third Fallacy: 'That truth is mighty and will prevail.'

"Fourth Fallacy: 'That great crises always produce great men.'

"Fifth Fallacy: 'That revolutions never roll backward.'

"Sixth Fallacy: 'That if religion is rightly presented, people will always welcome the preacher.'

"Seventh Fallacy: 'That in politics we may rely on the sober second thought of the people.'"—*Ballantine*.

Read Jer. 43:1-13. How did the leaders explain away the message from God? To what place in Egypt did they go? What message did God send by Jeremiah in Egypt? Who was to be the conqueror of Egypt? Note the irony of burning in fire the house of the god of the sun, v. 13.

Read chap. 44th and note: (1) The substance of the prophet's message in vv. 1-14; (2) The answer to the prophet in vv. 15-19; (3) The reply of Jeremiah in vv. 20-30.

"The whole book of Jeremiah shows how slowly the wrath of God arose against even this guilty people; how carefully he exposed to their view their great sin. . . . Verily, all that tender sympathy, faithful reproof, long delay, and admonitory forewarnings could do to reclaim and save guilty men was faithfully and fervently done to save this guilty nation, but in vain. The hour of retribution must come at last. It came, and its vengeance was terrible."

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "And this is the message which we have heard from him, and announce unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. . . . God is love. . . . My little children, guard yourselves from idols." 1 John 1:5; 4:16; 5:21. How sure am I that I am free from idolatry? What is idolatry? Am I putting anything in the place which God should occupy in my heart?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 26: JEREMIAH THE PROPHET AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

7th Day: REVIEW AND ESTIMATE OF THE CHARACTER OF JEREMIAH

Glance over Diagrams XXXIX-XLIII. Read over headings of §§115-140. As you read over the following headings dwell for a few seconds on each, recalling what you know of them: (1) Jeremiah and the Rechabites; (2) The burning of the roll; (3) The dungeon experience; (4) The potter's house; (5) The potter's bottle; (6) The Temple discourse; (7) The conspirators at Anathoth; (8) The baskets of figs; (9) The linen girdle; (10) The release of the captives; (11) The false prophet Hananiah; (12) The false prophets in Babylon; (13) The purchase of the field; (14) The secret interview with Zedekiah; (15) The experience in Egypt.

The study of Jeremiah's character is of great interest. He has been called the prophet of "the bleeding heart and the iron will." He combined the most contradictory traits of character. His endowment was such that he did not omit duty, but to perform duty often caused him keen anguish of heart. He was naturally diffident, yet was made steadfast in the will of God. He was timid, yet spake boldly in the name of his God. He possessed intense national feeling, yet was possessed of broad views. He was a man of prayer. He was jealous for and obedient to God. He was often perplexed and sometimes despondent, yet was continually sustained by the grace of God. This combination of traits in Jeremiah "is a strong proof of the divine origin of his mission."

"He is not a hero by nature, but by grace; and in his sometimes strange confessions we clearly read that grace never expelled nature. His life was at once the most natural and the most supernatural in the Old Testament. Let us then be patient with ourselves; God is better than our fears, and more generous than our highest hopes, if in base cowardice we do not shrink back from His call."—*Cheyne*.

Give your last moments to a review of Jer. 1:1-19.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Read Jeremiah 15:18-20. If God has not been found by me always what I expected, what has probably been the trouble? What meaning for me have the expressions, "If thou return," "If thou take forth the precious from the vile"?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 27: AMONG THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON

1st Day: § 141. THE CALL AND THE COMMISSION OF EZEKIEL

"Christ was not only the preacher of the message, He *was* the message."—*Robert E. Speer*.

A leading characteristic of Ezekiel is given in the last statement of 1:1, "I saw visions of God." The first chapter contains a description of the vision connected with the prophet's call. Before you read Ezek., chap. 1, by noting the following expressions taken from 1:22 and 26, get clearly in mind the fact that the sight which most affected the prophet was not the strange creatures and the wheels within the wheels, but the one who sat upon the throne, which throne was upon the firmament, which firmament or platform was above the wheels and the living creatures. The expressions are: "Over the head of the living creatures there was the likeness of a firmament," "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne ... and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above." In order that you may get still more clearly before you the picture as you read, take now a sheet of paper and draw two horizontal parallel lines about one inch apart across the middle of the paper. Below the lines write, "Wheels within wheels—Living Creatures." Between the lines write, "Platform." Above the lines write, "Throne," and above throne write, "Man on throne." Around these draw a circle. This combination was seen in a great storm-cloud in the North. Get the whole scene vividly before you.

Read now Ezekiel 1:1-28. Recall the description of Isaiah's vision when he was called (Isa. 6:1-2). Is Jeremiah represented as having witnessed any strange vision when he was called (cf. Jer., chap. 1)? Read Rev. 1:12-17.

Returning to Ezekiel, chap. 1, re-read vv. 25-28. Is it forcing meaning into the vision to think that the likeness to the "bow that is in the cloud" suggested the covenanted mercy and faithfulness of God?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "The Lord sat as king at the Flood; Yea, the Lord sitteth as king forever." Psa. 29:10. With what feelings do I contemplate the sovereign (not arbitrary) power of God?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 27: AMONG THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON

2d Day: § 141. THE CALL AND THE COMMISSION OF EZEKIEL

"Just now there is a great clamor and demand for 'culture,' but it is not so much culture that is needed as discipline."—*W. G. T. Shedd.*

Glance over Isa. 6:1-13, for the call and the commission of Isaiah, and over Jeremiah 1:1-19, for the call and the commission of Jeremiah. Recall the prominent features of the vision of Ezekiel given in chap. 1, and read Ezek. 2:1-3:27. Compare these three calls and the commissions. Write out points in common, and differences. Give some time to this, as only a quotation follows for today.

"Ezekiel's position is unique in the history of the prophets. He was far from Palestine, in which alone the prophets had hitherto appeared. That he should have been so was the hope of his people, for he thus became a center round which those could gather who were at last, under pressure of trouble, inclined to return to Jehovah. His words became the seed of a religious revival, which, two generations later, resulted in the return, and, through that, to the whole future development of the spiritual kingdom of God. . . . The exiles might have thought with Jacob, that, with the sacred soil where they had been wont to have access to the Creator, they had left His presence behind. But when the Divine Majesty appeared to Ezekiel on the banks of the Chebar in the land of the heathen, it showed that, if God had left His local sanctuary at Jerusalem, He was still with His people, and that, even without a temple, He was as accessible as when He sat between the Cherubim."—*Geikie.*

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Son of man, all my words which I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears." What is it to receive the words of God in the heart? Am I today welcoming truth and doing God's will?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 27: AMONG THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON

3d Day: § 142. THE CERTAINTY AND THE NECESSITY OF THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH.

"It is the absence of love, not its fulness, that makes us so impatient of the weaknesses and inconsistencies of our Christian brethren."—*Selected.*

Consult Diagram XLV, and seek clearly to apprehend the fact that half of the book of Ezekiel refers to the events and the experiences preceding the fall of Jerusalem. Glance at the following passages for the order of arrangement of the book, which is, in the main, chronological: 1:2; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1 (here the chronological order yields to the geographical order in which the prophecies about foreign nations are arranged); 29:1; 31:1; 32:1; 32:17; 40:1.

Consult Diagram XLVI. The material for today is that under Part First, I, B. Note its relation to the outline of the book as a whole, and read what is under B.

Read Ezek. 4:1-3. Of what was this to be a sign to the house of Israel? Was not this in harmony with what Jeremiah at the same time was declaring at Jerusalem? Who were delivering a different message both in Babylon and in Judea? See Jer. 29:8-10. Read Ezek. 4:4-17. What is the point of this parable? Keep before you constantly as you read this and following passages that the burden of the prophet's message was as stated in the section at the head of this page. There may be a difference of opinion as to the literal or figurative character of this narrative, but after all to determine this is not the most important thing. See that you grasp the truth which each story is intended to convey.

Read Ezek. 5:1-4. Read now the explanation in plain language in vv. 6-17. Are you keeping before you the fact that these prophecies belong to the latter days of Jeremiah's work in Jerusalem? Consult Diagrams XL-XLIII.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Because thou has defiled my sanctuary—therefore will I also diminish thee." Ezek. 5:11. "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit."—*Paul*. Am I keeping myself pure? What is the penalty of not doing so? What is the reward for doing so? Answer in the words of a beatitude.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 27: AMONG THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON

4th Day: § 142. THE CERTAINTY AND THE NECESSITY OF THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH

"There is nothing so powerful as example; we put others straight, by walking straight ourselves."—*Selected.*

Note in Ezek. 6:7, 10, 13, 14 the expressions, "shall know that I am the Lord." With this in mind, read the chapter, in which the prophet apostrophizes the land, and declares that evil can only be effectually rooted out by depopulation and desolation. Continuing, rapidly read chap. 7.

Turn now to Ezek., chap. 36, in which again the land is the subject. This is after the desolation. You should, before reading, seek to grasp clearly the balancing of the two parts of the book of Ezekiel. Note the titles of the two parts of Diagram XLVI. The words, Pre-exilic, Denunciation, Desolation, balance the words, Post-exilic, Consolation, Restoration. Read now chap. 36 and note especially vv. 25-33, not omitting to notice the prominence given in the chapter as a whole to the restoration of the desolate country and cities. Dwell for a moment upon v. 37a. What reason can you think of why there are some things which God cannot give until they are asked for?

"It is not a little noteworthy that it was precisely from the date of the overthrow of priestly rites and temple service, and the substitution of spiritual worship and continuous religious instruction that religion revived. Ezekiel was the true forerunner of Ezra."—*Geikie.*

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I observe thy law." What is often one result of affliction? But is one always to infer that evil is in the life because affliction is present? How should affliction be borne? "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and of the end of the Lord."

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 27: AMONG THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON

5th Day: § 142. THE CERTAINTY AND THE NECESSITY OF THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH

"After all, the kind of world one carries about in one's self is the important thing; and the world outside takes all its grace, color, and value from that."—*James Russell Lowell*.

Turning to Diagram XLV, read what is said about chaps. 8-11 just above the Notes. Chaps. 8, 9 and 11 are comparatively short, and chap. 10 is mainly a repetition of the vision of chap. 1, so you will likely be able in the time to get the substance of all four.

Read chap. 8, noting such key expressions as "yet other greater abominations," "therefore will I also deal in fury." Note v. 12. Read chap. 9. Cf. v. 9 with 8:12. Glance over chap. 10. The one who gives directions concerning the city and prepares to take his departure therefrom is identified by the prophet as the same whom he saw in vision on the Chebar. Read chap. 11. What here suggests a scene in the life of Jeremiah?

In the Studies on Jeremiah several quotations from A Character Study by Dr. Ballantine were made. The same writer has written A Literary Study of the Prophet Ezekiel which is very illuminating. From it more than one extract will appear in this and the next Study. Read the whole of it if possible.

"Ezekiel's principal themes are five: (1) God's majesty; (2) Israel's apostasy and chastisement; (3) The judgments to come on heathen nations; (4) Israel's restoration; (5) The final consummation of the kingdom of peace. . . The prophet gives the world a fresh conception of the divine majesty in the sublime vision of the Cherubim Chariot. . . We take it that the vision of the Cherubim Chariot, in spite of its exactitude of details, is not to be regarded as anything more than a symbolic representation of God as enthroned over all the elements and powers and forces of creation, whether animate or inanimate. . . In contrast with the majesty of God, Ezekiel had to describe the apostasy of Israel. This, as we have seen, is one of three chief burdens of the Old Testament. It is part of the proof of the absolute need that the world had for Christ.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 27: AMONG THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON

5th Day: § 142. THE CERTAINTY AND THE NECESSITY OF THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH

'The completion of this demonstration was necessary to that 'fulness of time' in which God should send His Son. The Old Testament, in so far as it touches man, is a record of utter failure. The sins of Ezekiel's day were violence, bloodshed, unchastity, disobedience to parents, oppression, Sabbath-breaking, bribery, extortion, and in general an extraordinary hardihood in wickedness. False prophets, profane priests and wolf-like princes, all deceived and preyed upon a populace which shared their vices. Idolatry of all kinds, copied from the abominations of all the nations from Egypt to Assyria, a perfect syncretism of revolting rites, culminating in that last triumph of superstitious infatuation, child-sacrifice, had displaced the worship of Israel's covenant God, Jehovah . . . Ezekiel's view is the opposite of that view which sees in the Hebrew religion an evolution of the religious genius of the people themselves. He knows nothing of 'the firmness and the consistency' of the Hebrew people in seeking perfect religion. He sees only the spontaneous love of God pressing its gifts upon the grossness and stubbornness of men. Light has come and all men love darkness rather than light. 'Thus saith the Lord God,' he cries, 'I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name, which ye have profaned among the nations whither ye went.'"—*Ballantine*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "For they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth." What is the tendency of the life which ignores the presence of God? How may I be conscious of the presence of God? What are the advantages of such consciousness?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 27: AMONG THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON

6th Day: § 142. THE CERTAINTY AND THE NECESSITY OF THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH

"Prosperity is a great teacher; adversity is a greater. Possession pampers the mind; privation trains and strengthens it."—*Hazlitt*.

"Israel's proneness to idolatry is depicted by the prophet under the figure of a wife's infidelity. This he does in the long 16th chapter and in the almost equally long 23d chapter. In these chapters the relentless realism of our author's methods is most startling. The subject is a loathsome one. The instinct of delicacy is to escape from it as speedily and euphemistically as possible. But Ezekiel means not merely to suggest the picture, but to make us see it. We feel that we might be spared some of the ranker words, some of the more revolting situations, some of the more indecent exposures. Must we 'the supervisors grossly gape on,' as Shakespeare would say, and behold the very acts of shame? Yes: down through one step after another we go like men who must explore a sewer and who, as they proceed, sink up to their noses in filth. It is dreadful to read; but the result is such an expression of the odiousness of apostasy from God as is without a parallel in literature."—*Ballantine*.

Read chap. 16. After reading think by which you are the more impressed, the awfulness of the apostasy of man, or the greatness of the love of God in forgiveness of sin.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?" How heartily can I utter those words? Do I prove by loving much that I have been forgiven much?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 27: AMONG THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON

7th Day: § 142. THE CERTAINTY AND THE NECESSITY OF THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH

"It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character . . . It may be truly said that the record of those three years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists."—*Lecky* in his *History of Morals*.

Re-read the quotation found in the 6th Day of this Study. Read now Ezekiel, chapter 23d. If you have any time remaining read from any part of chaps. 12-24, preferably perhaps chap. 13th, which denounces the false prophets and prophetesses. Cf. Jer., chap. 23. Read further the words of Dr. Ballantine:

"The burden of the Old Testament is to exhibit, first, the only living and true God as the Creator and Governor of the world, in His holiness, justice and spontaneous love, unwearily occupied with some effort of grace; and secondly, men in general, and the Jews in particular, as inexcusably wicked, swinishly treading under foot the pearls of privilege which heaven again and again offers. The Old Testament closes with this vivid impression of a God infinitely glorious and gracious, but who has up that point failed to try any remedy powerful enough for the inveterate backsliding of men. The servants sent to the vineyard all fail. Some are beaten, some are stoned. It remains only for God to send His Son. The strongest proofs of the inspiration of the Old Testament are the perfection of the divine character portrayed and the profound view of human wickedness, both leading up to the expectation of One whom the love of God shall send to save His people from their sins. Was there ever a book so grand, so sad, so hopeful, as the Hebrew Scriptures?"

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Read and reflect upon Ezekiel 20:44.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 28: AMONG THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON

1st Day: § 142. THE CERTAINTY AND THE NECESSITY OF THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH

§ 147. SOME PSALMS REFLECTING EXPERIENCES OF THE EXILE

"Search thine own heart; what paineth thee
In others, in thyself may be;
All dust is frail, all flesh is weak;
Be thou the true man thou dost seek!"—*Whittier*.

The Jews to whom Ezekiel was sent got the idea that they were suffering exclusively on account of the sins of their forefathers. This is refuted in Ezek. 18. Read Ezek. 18:1-32, the central thought of which is, "the soul that sinneth it shall die." One of the chief messages of Ezekiel was this doctrine of individual responsibility. Read chap. 33. Compare vv. 13-20 with the message to Jeremiah at the potter's house (Jer. 18:1-12). Read Ezek. 33:21-33 with care. Key verses are 21, 24, 29, 33. You will be much interested in vv. 30-32 as descriptive of the effect of the prophet's preaching. The downfall of Jerusalem would be evidence that he spake truly. Read again v. 24. Nothing short of the actual destruction of their sacred city would convince the Jews that it could fall, so literally did they interpret the promises of God. Read again vv. 13-20.

What estimate of Ezekiel as a man do you feel justified in making at this time?

Read Psalm 44.*

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." Do I take heed how the preacher speaks, or do I take heed how I hear?

*This may be omitted.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 28: AMONG THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON

2d Day: § 142. JUDGMENTS ON THE NATIONS

§ 147. SOME PSALMS REFLECTING EXPERIENCES OF THE
EXILE

"There is but one test of a good life: that the man shall continue to grow more exacting about his own behavior."—*Robert Louis Stevenson*.

The capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar was but a part of a great Western campaign which resulted in the submission to Babylon of the various nations round about Palestine, even of Egypt itself. You will recall what Jeremiah, who had been compelled to go to Egypt with the remnant which feared Nebuchadnezzar, said as he placed stones in the brickwork at Tahpanhes. (See Jer. 43:9-12. Cf. 44:29, 30.)

Glance at Diagram XLV, noting the portion of the book of Ezekiel composed of prophecies against foreign nations. Note Ezek. 25:2, 8, 12, 15; 26:2; 28:21; 29:2, for the nations mentioned. Passing to the lamentation for Tyre (Ezek., chap. 27), pause for a little time upon it. Tyre is described under the figure of a magnificent ship which becomes a helpless wreck on the high seas. The chapter is of peculiar archeological and historical value, and is highly poetic in conception.

Give the main portion of today's time to the prophecies about Egypt. Only selections from the whole will be made. You should recall the fact that the latter kings of Judah looked to Egypt for aid and were encouraged to do so by the false prophets. Read Ezek. 29:1-9, where Egypt is represented as a crocodile. Read enough of Ezek., 31st chap., to get the force of the comparison with Assyria. If you have not time for the whole of chap. 32, read from the 17th verse to the end. "Nothing that Dante ever wrote surpasses the dreary ghastliness of this appalling scene under the murky skies of Sheol.... 'Dull and heavy' we would not call this dirge, but grim as the clank of chains and dreadful as the knell of doom."

• Read Psalm 74.*

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "The wicked shall return to Sheol.
Even all the nations that forget God."—Psa. 9:17.
What is my duty to the stater?

*This may be omitted.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 28: AMONG THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON

- 3d Day: § 144. VISIONS OF RESTORATION OF LAND, PEOPLE AND TRUE WORSHIP
§ 147. SOME PSALMS REFLECTING EXPERIENCES OF THE EXILE

"The Christian is an unique phenomenon. You cannot account for him; and, if you could, he would not be a Christian."—*Selected.*

Read Psalm 79. Refer to Diagram XLVI and read all under Part Second.

There are three portions of scripture which should be always associated together. They are the 23d Psalm, the 10th chapter of the Gospel by John and the 34th chapter of Ezekiel. Repeat aloud Psa. 23d if you are able. Read John 10:1-18. Give the remainder of today's time to Ezekiel 34th, which you will much enjoy. May it be of great profit also.

"As might be expected from a calling so important and familiar to the Israelites, many comparisons and lessons are drawn from pastoral life. The constant presence of the shepherd among his sheep and his protection of them were arresting features that were easily transferred to higher relationships. Psa. 23d remains the simplest and profoundest expression of trust in God. The dependence of the sheep upon the shepherd is not a figure for the beginning of the spiritual life merely—to be left behind when we know as we have been known; the redeemed and glorified are still being led to the living fountains of water (Rev. 7:17)."—*Mackie* in BIBLE MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring." What measure of my Lord's yearning have I for the lost? Read and reflect on Ezekiel 34:18, 19.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 28: AMONG THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON

4th Day: § 144. VISIONS OF RESTORATION OF LAND, PEOPLE AND TRUE WORSHIP

§ 147. SOME PSALMS REFLECTING EXPERIENCES OF THE EXILE

"Let us be content, in work
To do the thing we can, and not presume
To fret because it's little."—*Elizabeth Barrett Browning.*

Read Ps. 80.

This is the last day that we may give to Ezekiel, although much remains of great interest.

"We said that Ezekiel was the prophet of Israel's renaissance. This appears in the famous vision of the Valley of Dry Bones. . . . Isaiah has a thought like Ezekiel: but it is far from the realism of Ezekiel, who does not ask our imagination to supply what he suggests, but simply to see what he supplies. Yet mark the artistic repose, the surpassing sublimity of the total effect. It is like the cathedral of Milan. Each stone is a separate work of art and yet the whole is a unit."—*Ballantine.*

Read Ezekiel 37:1-28, making such notes as you think best. Chapters 40-48 describe under the "precise forms of geographical surveys, architectural specifications and ritualistic rubrics," the glories of the golden age. Read the first twelve verses of chap. 46 and then read Rev. 22:1-5. The key expression of all these chapters is the last one of the entire book—*Jehovah—shammah—The Lord is there.*

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." Rev. 21:3. How constant is my sense of the presence of God and what is the effect of recognizing God's presence? Am I grateful for it?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 28: AMONG THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON

5th Day: § 145. THE STORY OF DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS

§ 147. SOME PSALMS REFLECTING EXPERIENCES OF THE
EXILE

"Circumstances are beyond the control of man, but his conduct is in his own power."—*Disraeli*.

Read the 1st chapter of Daniel chiefly for the instruction which it gives about the method of carrying out a purpose of the heart. Note the words in v. 8, "Daniel purposed—therefore he requested."

Read the 2d chap. of Daniel, which is rich in revelation of the character of the man. The verses which will yield most are vv. 14-23, 27-30. Write down traits which you recognize.

The dream is found in vv. 31-35, and the interpretation in vv. 36-45. In v. 44 the Messianic Kingdom is announced. Following are some of its declared characteristics: (1) It was to be of superhuman origin; (2) It was to be of small beginning; (3) It was to progress gradually; (4) It would become universal; (5) It would endure forever.

In the 3d chapter of Daniel, vv. 17, 18, are the keys for the study of the character of the three friends of Daniel. This account is doubted by some on the ground that there was not occasion sufficient for such supernatural displays. Great caution should be exercised in thus judging. One is inclined to ask what causes entered into the permanent cure of the Jews of idolatry during this sojourn in Babylon, and whether thus to cure the nation to which were entrusted the oracles of God did not afford sufficient occasion for exceptional manifestations from heaven.

Read Psalm 102.* Spend a moment on Diagram XLVI.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "But if not... we will not serve thy gods." How frequently do I manifest the spirit here shown? Is the infrequency due to absence of occasion or to my weakness? Has God ever failed me when thus trusted?

*Omit if crowded for time.

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 28: AMONG THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON

6th Day: § 145. THE STORY OF DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS

"I have a life with Christ to live,
And, ere I live it, must I wait
Till learning can clear answer give
Of this and that book's date?

"I have a life in Christ to live;
I have a death in Christ to die;
And must I wait till science give
All doubts a full reply?

"Nay; rather, while the sea of doubt
Is raging wildly round about,
Questioning of life and death and sin,
Let me but creep within
Thy fold, O Christ, and at Thy feet
Take but the lowest seat;
And hear Thine awful voice repeat,
In gentlest accents heavenly sweet,
'Come unto me and rest;
Believe me and be blest'."—*Shairp*.

Read chaps. 4-6 of Daniel today. Do not miss the conception of God given in 6:26, 32-37; nor the key expressions, "though thou knewest all this," and, "God hast thou not glorified" in 7:22, 23. Note also "as he did aforetime," and, "thy God whom thou servest continually" in 6:10, 16.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver". . .
"Thy God whom thou servest continually he will deliver thee". . .
"The living God hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."
What is the relation between continuousness of service of God and the presence of evidence of His existence and power in the life? Do I serve God continually?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 28: AMONG THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON

7th Day: § 146. THE VISIONS OF DANIEL

§ 147. SOME PSALMS REFLECTING EXPERIENCES OF THE EXILE

“Have thy tools ready; God will find thee work.”—*Selected.*

Compelled as we are to select material for one day from the whole of the second half of the book of Daniel, we shall choose the 9th chapter. Read this chapter and record five striking things about it. You should give some thought today to the place of prayer in Daniel's life. It is worth while to observe that the knowledge which he derived from books concerning the time of the end of the captivity, did not interfere with his praying for deliverance. It was rather an incentive to prayer.

“From the first Daniel stands firm to what he felt was right for him; and in that power to stand firm, and keep to the position he took up, may be found his marked individuality. No one could ever turn him. He could be gentle, patient, unobtrusive, but what he made up his mind was right for him to do he just kept on doing, overcoming all hindrances by his quiet persistency. . . . Men say it was wonderful that Daniel braved the lions' den; they do not see how much more wonderful it was that he stood fast amid daily associations for long years, kept his integrity, sustained his ministry, braved his difficulties, held fast to the right, became known as ready to serve, but as uncorruptible, until at last ‘no fault could be found in him’ . . . It is usual to make out that Daniel was a singularly gifted man. The record does not say so. The whole force is given to producing the impression of sterling character, firm, decided, constant, enduring. Daniel did not reach his position by any sudden spring. It is easy to miss seeing that years intervened between the incidents narrated concerning him, and that during those years he was building up the confidence which alone made his elevation possible and acceptable. . . . Persistency in goodness wins man's rewards and God's approval.”—*Tuck.*

Read Psalm 137.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: What is the best lesson for me from the life of Daniel? How much do I need to be on guard against compromising in order to succeed?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 29: LEADERS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

- 1st Day: § 148. THE EDICT AND THE AID OF CYRUS
§ 149. THE RETURNING CLANS
§ 150. THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE UNDERTAKEN AND DELAYED
§ 169. SOME PSALMS OF THE RESTORATION PERIOD

"It appears to be a fundamental principle of the divine administration never to do in an extraordinary way that which can be equally well accomplished in an ordinary way."—*Selected*.

Spend not more than five minutes on Diagram XLVII. Read Ezra 1:1-2:2; also 2:64-3:13. Re-read 2:64, 65 to be sure you have a definite idea of the number returning. Do not miss the prominence given in this account to the agency of God in bringing to pass a very unlikely event.

Various psalms have been suggested as having been used on the occasion of the laying of the foundation of the temple. Among these are the 87th, 106th, 107th, 118th, 136th. Note the refrain in Psalms 118 and 136, and read Ezra 3:10, 11. Read Psalm 118 and judge how appropriate its sentiments would be for the occasion referred to above. Of this psalm Luther wrote: "I have taken in hand my precious psalm, the Confitemini, and put on paper my meditations upon it. For it is my own psalm; which I delight in. For although the whole Psalter and the Holy Scripture is dear to me, my proper comfort and life, I have taken so to this psalm in particular that I must call it my own. Many a service has it done me; out of many great perils has it helped me. . . . Would God that all the world would challenge the psalm for their own as I do it; it would be such friendly contention as scarce any unity or love could compare with. Alas that there should be so few, even among those who might well do it, who will once say to the Holy Scriptures, or to some particular psalm, Thou art my book; thou shalt be mine own psalm!"

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Read Psalm 118:6; also Heb. 13:5b, 6, in the Greek if possible, in order to get the force of the negatives. It is equal to, "I will not in any wise forsake thee, nor will I at all ever under any circumstances leave thee in the lurch." How fully do I know the trust expressed in Psa. 118? Does my heart fully respond to God's promises and say, I will not fear?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 29: LEADERS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

2d Day: § 150. THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE UNDERTAKEN AND DELAYED

§ 151. THE MESSAGE OF HAGGAI

§ 169. SOME PSALMS OF THE RESTORATION PERIOD

"You can never escape a duty by not acknowledging it."—*Dr. Alex. Mackenzie.*

Read Ezra 4:1-5:24. The delay lasted about fifteen years. Read also Ezra 5:1.

Read now the prophecy of Haggai, following the outline suggested below:

"No prophet ever appeared at a more critical juncture in the history of the Jewish people, and, it may be added, no prophet was more immediately successful. The prophecies of Haggai are dated with unusual precision, and are therefore very easily distinguished from one another. There are four distinct utterances:

1. In the first (chap. 1:1-11), Haggai reproaches the people for their neglect of the rebuilding of the temple. The good result of this appeal is narrated in vv. 12-15.

2. In the second (chap. 2:1-9), delivered about a month after the work had been resumed, he counteracts the disparaging observations the old men had been making on the rising temple.

3. In the third (chap. 2:10-19), delivered exactly three months after the building had been resumed, he explains to the people why their past prayers had been unanswered, and promises them abundant crops if they go on vigorously with the temple.

4. In the fourth (chap. 2:20-23), delivered on the same day as the third, ample assurances of support and protection are given to Zerubabel."—*Dods.*

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your ceiled houses, while this house lieth waste?" Consider whether there is an application of these words to the present. Is there an application of them to my own present? Shall I heed the message?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 29: LEADERS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

3d Day: § 152. THE MESSAGE OF ZECHARIAH

"Every noble life leaves the fibre of it interwoven forever in the work of the world; by so much evermore the strength of the human race has gained."—*Ruskin*.

Read Ezra 5:1 and 6:14, and consult Diagram XLVII.

Read Zechariah 1:1-6, the substance of which is: O Israel, do not do like as your fathers. See what God did to them for their sins. Be wise. Cf. Zech. 1:1 and Hag. 1:1; 2:1, 10, for the time of the prophecy. Haggai's words are dated September, October and December; Zechariah's in November and February. See 1:7. The year was 520 B. C.

In Zech. 2:7-6:8 are eight visions. They contain messages of comfort and encouragement to Israel. We have:

1. The Horsemen among the Myrtle trees, 1:7-17.
2. The Horns and the Smiths, 1:18-21.
3. The Surveyor, 2:1-13.
4. Joshua and Satan, 3:1-10.
5. The Golden Candlestick, 4:1-14.
6. The Flying Roll, 5:1-4.
7. The Woman in the Ephah, 5:5-11.
8. The Four Chariots, 6:1-8.

Read the accounts with explanations of the first four visions with the historical situation clearly before you. Remembering the object of the prophet, you will not have difficulty in getting the meaning.

Think of illustrations from Scripture of the assertion, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "I will be a wall of fire round about, and I will be the glory in the midst of her." "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." How fully have I entered into the secret of the love of God for me? Does it relieve me of worry and care? Do I rejoice in my God?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 29: LEADERS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

4th Day: § 152. THE MESSAGE OF ZECHARIAH
§ 153. THE TEMPLE COMPLETED

"A telegraph wire was long supposed to be essential to the transmission of a telegraphic message. Yet, even then, the vital truth was recognized as in the message, and not in the wire. A wise man knew enough to study the message that came over the wire, instead of studying the wire that brought the message. Nowadays a wire is not even deemed essential to the carrying of a message. Many a message comes without the aid of a wire, and it is just as true and just as important as when a wire was considered all-important to its transmission. Is there not a lesson here for those who are seeking to get God's message through His revelation? While critics of one sort are spending their strength in dissecting the wire over which the message came, a mind that is intent on the message can get it over a wire that has been broken and knotted again, or even, in some cases, without the wire—single or spliced."—*Selected.*

We may not tarry longer on Zechariah than to read and note the wonderful message of the vision of the Golden Candlestick, Zech. 4:1-14, the core of which is in vv. 6-9. In the latter part of the chapter there is a strange combination, concerning which one has said: "We have the trees growing, and the oil flowing, and the lamps glowing." The continuousness and the abundance of the supply of divine grace is surely here set forth.

After reading Zech. 4:1-14, read Ezra 5:1-6:22. Think of the difficulties with which Zerubbabel had to contend and read again Zech., 4th chapter.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." What is my present difficulty? How am I trying to remove it? Am I applying the power here provided? "Who-soever shall say to this mountain. . . . and shall not doubt. . . . he shall have it."

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STUDY 29: LEADERS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

- 5th Day: § 154. ESTHER MADE QUEEN
§ 155. HAMAN'S PROMOTION AND PLOT
*§ 156. THE DELIVERANCE OF THE JEWS

"The great secret of success in life is to be ready when your opportunity comes."—*Lord Beaconsfield*.

The design of the book of Esther is to describe the origin of the feast of Purim, and to indicate God's providential care over His people.

"The feast of Purim is the strongest external evidence we have for the historical character of the book, and gives perhaps a sufficient ground for interpreting it from that point of view. The poetic interpretation reduces it to a strange fictitious story."—*Stearns*.

"The same God who watched over the builders of the temple and the walls of the holy city also guarded these stranger Jews in the one hundred and twenty provinces of Ahasuerus' empire. 'No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper,' is the lesson of this story. It is a commentary on the great promise, 'I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.'"—*Moorehead*.

Read Esther, chaps. 1-5, all the while noting the contrasts between Jewish and Persian types of character. How account for the difference?

Read Psalm 125. "There is only one way by which you can ever have the mountains about your Jerusalem, and that is by building your Jerusalem where God has already built the mountains."—*MacKenzie*.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: How fully have I learned that no risk is run when one does right? Shall I live today in the assurance that God is round about me on every hand? What effect shall this have upon my thought and action?

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STUDY 29: LEADERS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

6th Day: § 156. THE DELIVERANCE OF THE JEWS
§ 157. THE FEAST OF PURIM

"Behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above His own."

While the name of God is not mentioned in the book of Esther, the veil which hides Him is so thin in places that we can almost see through. We feel His presence as we read. In no one place is this more plain than in the closing verses of chap. 4. Here we have action determined upon followed by prayer for success. The action determined upon was manifestly the only thing to do. There was no need to pray for guidance here. Today we have too frequently a reversal of the order. Prayer is not often enough followed by action, so that much that goes by the name of prayer is naught.

"The obvious truth here is, if we really pray in any given behalf, we mean that we are quite ready to be used to answer our own prayers. This law of the relation of prayer to action invests much of our praying with an element of great seriousness. Into how much, for example, of our praying for the conversion of the heathen, home or foreign, does this element consciously enter? And yet there is the law. If we pray for the redemption of Africa, knowing that the answer to our prayer means the sending of thousands of missionaries into the certainty of ruined health, and the probability of speedy death, do we mean that we are ready, God willing, to be of that number? If not, what, think you, do our prayers avail?"—*Scofield*.

Read Esther, chapters 6-10.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Read Psalm 127:1, 2. The 2d verse means that even in sleep (see marginal rendering) God's own get what n-painstaking can secure for those who do not take Him into their counsel. How fully shall I rest today in the provision of God for me?

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STUDY 29: LEADERS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

7th Day: § 158. THE DECREE OF ARTAXERXES AND THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

§ 159. THE GRIEF AND THE PRAYER OF EZRA

§ 160. THE REFORMS OF EZRA

"That which is good to be done cannot be done too soon, and if it is neglected to be done early it will frequently happen that it will not be done at all."—*Bishop Ma.t.*

Consult Diagram XLVII for the relationship of events recorded in Ezra, chaps. 7-10. These four chapters are the portion for today. Only names are found in 8:2-14 and 10:18-44, so these parts may be passed by in reading. If pressed for time, omit also 7:11-26, which contains a copy of the royal letter given to Ezra.

Ezra was studious, prayerful, trustful, grateful, practical. Note these and other traits as you proceed.

Read now Ezra 7: 1-10. Dwell upon v. 10. Note the order: (1) To seek; (2) To do; (3) To teach. At least glance over the letter of Artaxerxes, 7:11-26, noting the prominence given to God in it. Read 7:27, 28; 8:15-10:17. In 8:1-16 are given the names of the leaders of the 1500 persons who accompanied Ezra to Jerusalem.

"A modern pseudo-liberalism objects to the narrowness of view, which induced the leaders of the Jewish community to bring this 'comparatively trivial and in some respects questionable' controversy before the notice of Ezra. . . . But it is not denied that the 'narrower view', which after all has the sanction of the 'Rabbi of Tarsus,' who bids his converts 'not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers' (2 Cor. 6:14), was suited to the times, and helped to keep 'alive the spirit of exclusive patriotism and of uncompromising zeal', which alone enabled the community to maintain its existence during the times of depression and of trial that were approaching."—*Rawlinson.*

Read Psalm 126 in the light of all you know of the period of the return from Babylon.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Ezra set his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." Law means instruction, teaching. How much am I trying to teach that I do not do? How satisfactory is the effort?

Studies in Old Testament Characters

STUDY 30: LEADERS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

1st Day: § 161. THE OCCASION AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF NEHE-
MIAH'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

§ 162. THE BUILDING OF THE CITY WALL IN SPITE OF
OPPOSITION

"Here are two very essential reins of influence by which people may be turned hither and thither, restrained, urged forward or controlled. One is gentleness. 'The power of gentleness,' said Henry Martyn, 'is irresistible.' The balance of gentleness is firmness. Let the silken reign of gentleness be united with the fine-drawn steel wire of firmness and you hold in your grasp power which crowned heads might envy."

—*Selected.*

Few lives of the Old Testament are more interesting or instructive than that of Nehemiah. He is a remarkable illustration of the effective combination of many desirable characteristics. He was a man of gentleness and of firmness; of prayer and of push; of faith and of works; of caution and of courage; of sympathy and of persistence; of deliberation and of energetic, prompt action. He was a man of rare piety and at the same time a most efficient man of affairs. He was at once an originator, a propagator, an organizer and an executor. He was a common-sense enthusiast. He was a "practical mystic."

Read Neh. 1:1-2:20, judging as to the correctness of the above estimate of Nehemiah. The key to the third chapter is the expression, "And next unto him." You need not spend more than two minutes upon it. Read 3:1-23, and do as directed above concerning chaps. 1, 2.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king"—Nehemiah asked the King of heaven before he answered the king of earth. How often do I offer ejaculatory prayer? Who are most likely to do so? What has been the proportion of time spent in prayer during this course of Bible study? Have I spent enough time in prayer?

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STUDY 30: LEADERS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

2d Day: § 162. THE BUILDING OF THE CITY WALL IN SPITE OF
OPPOSITION

§ 163. REFORMS OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

"No, no," said Livingstone to Stanley when urged to go home, "to be knighted as you say by the Queen, welcomed by thousands of admirers, yes—but impossible. It must not, cannot, will not be. I must finish my task."

Consult Diagram XLVII a moment for the historical situation.

Read the first two paragraphs of Study 30, 1st Day. We have yet further characterization of Nehemiah to consider today. Read Neh. 5:1-7:5, writing down any traits in Nehemiah worthy of notice, and compare your result with the following paragraph.

Nehemiah was unselfish, generous-hearted, hospitable, prudent, vigorously just, properly reserved, vigilant. He knew human nature, was uncompromising with evil, and ruled in the fear of the Lord. He was irreproachable in conduct, broad-minded, humble, dependent upon God, independent of man when occasion required. He avoided occasions of stumbling, and wisely selected his subordinates and associates.

What time remains employ in formulating a statement of the character of the God of Nehemiah as revealed in Neh., chaps. 1-6.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: "I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" . . . "Should such a man as I flee? . . . I will not go in."

What answer have I for the tempter when he beguiles me? What sort of man am I in the presence of such an one as Nehemiah? How often and with what energy am I able to say: "I will not"?

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STUDY 30: LEADERS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

- 3d Day: § 163. REFORMS OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH
§ 164. A PRAISEFUL PRAYER
§ 165. THE COVENANT AND ITS APPROVERS

"I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand as in what direction we are moving. To reach the port of heaven we must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it; but we must sail, and not drift nor lie at anchor."—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

That Ezra remained at Jerusalem during the dozen or more years after he had instituted the reforms of which we learned in Study 29, is unlikely. Before, he had been associated with Zerubbabel, who was governor. Now, it is with Nehemiah that he is to work. The two were excellently fitted to assist and supplement each other. One possessed in a high degree the qualities needed in a political leader; was an active warrior, a sagacious statesman, well suited to grapple with the practical difficulties and dangers of all kinds; the other was above all things a teacher, able to impress men's minds, to expound, convince, persuade, instruct, educate, guide in the way of true knowledge and pure religion. Nehemiah's practical good sense showed him, when he had battled with the external difficulties of the situation and overcome them, that the internal difficulties were, after all, the greatest, and that, to meet them, he needed a man of spiritual insight and influence, who could bring to bear upon the people the weight of authority which still remained to the priests, together with the magic of a high personal reputation for wisdom and sanctity, such as would incline all to submit to him."—*Rawlinson.*

In Neh., chaps. 8-10, we have an account (1) of the reading and explanation of the law, (2) its solemn approval with confession of past sins, and (3) the renewal and signature of the covenant to keep the law. Read these chapters today. What is the striking characteristic of the prayer in chap. 9?

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Psalm 119 may be called the Bible Study Psalm. It belongs probably to the period of the reconstruction. There are in it: (1) Declarations; (2) Petitions; (3) Confessions; (4) Determinations. Read the first 16 verses with this four-fold division in mind, and note the cordiality with which you are able to approve each sentiment. Check off any sentiments to which you are not able to respond heartily. Ask yourself, why? Memorize v. 11.

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STUDY 30: LEADERS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

4th Day: § 166. THE DEDICATION OF THE WALLS

§ 167. CORRECTION OF ABUSES BY NEHEMIAH

"But your victory rests with yourself. Kinghood over the vast territory of self must be, in order to a genuine forgiveness. To tear yourself from yourself, to double yourself up and thrust yourself under your heels, and make a general smash of yourself, and be all the more truly yourself for this mauling and self-annihilation,—this is the work before you, and a mighty work it is. To accomplish this, we must be close enough to Immanuel to feel the beating of His heart."—*Bushnell*.

Read rapidly Neh. 11:27-47, which contains an account of the dedication of the wall. Neh. 13:1-33 contains an account of certain reforms and regulations of Nehemiah made about 532 B. C., or 12 years after his first visit to Jerusalem (see 13:6). Rapidly read this portion. The prophecy of Malachi most likely belongs to these last days of Nehemiah, inasmuch as the disorders of which the prophet speaks were those with which Nehemiah contended. Tomorrow we shall consider the message of Malachi. Following is an excellent summary by Bishop Arthur Herve of the character of Nehemiah. As you read it judge respecting its accuracy. Is there any fault which you would find with Nehemiah? Did he recognize himself as imperfect?

"On reviewing the character of Nehemiah, we seem unable to find a single fault to counterbalance his many and great virtues. For pure and disinterested patriotism he stands unrivaled. . . . Every act of his during his government bespeaks one who had no selfishness in his nature. All he did was noble, generous, high-minded, courageous, and to the highest degree upright. But to stern integrity he united great humility and kindness, and a princely hospitality. As a statesman he combined forethought, prudence, and sagacity in counsel, with vigor, promptitude, and decision in action. In dealing with the enemies of his country, he was wary, penetrating, and bold. In directing internal economy of the state, he took a comprehensive view of the real welfare of the people, and adopted the measures best calculated to

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STUDY 30: LEADERS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

4th Day: § 166. THE DEDICATION OF THE WALLS
§ 167. CORRECTION OF ABUSES BY NEHEMIAH

promote it. In dealing, whether with friend or foe, he was utterly free from favor or fear, conspicuous for the simplicity with which he aimed only at doing what was right, without respect of persons. But in nothing was he more remarkable than for his piety, and the singleness of eye with which he walked before God. He seems to have undertaken everything in dependence upon God, with prayer for His blessing and guidance, and to have sought his reward only from God."

PERSONAL THOUGHT: With Psalm 119:17-32 deal as directed to do with vv. 1-16 in Personal Thought of yesterday. If a declaration, do you make it? If a petition, do you offer it? If a confession, do you present it? If a determination, do you will it? Memorize v. 18.

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STUDY 30: LEADERS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

5th Day: § 168. THE MESSAGE OF MALACHI

"God reveals Himself in His Word as He does in His works. In both we see a self-revealing, self-concealing God, who makes Himself known only to those who earnestly seek Him; in both we find stimulants to faith and occasions for unbelief; in both we find contradictions whose high harmony is hidden, except from him who gives up his whole mind to reverence; in both, in a word, it is a law of revelation that the heart of man should be tested in receiving it; and that in the spiritual life, as well as in the bodily, man must eat his bread in the sweat of his brow."—*Neander*.

By way of review and a final summary: (1) Write out in chronological order in a perpendicular column the names of all the persons who easily come into mind beginning with Abraham and ending with Nehemiah; (2) Set over in a second column on the right the good characters; (3) Set over in a third column to the right the bad characters; (4) Set over in a fourth column your selection of the thirty characters, whose study, on the whole, you consider to be most profitable for instruction and reproof.

Recalling what was noted in Study 30, 4th Day, about the relation of Malachi to Nehemiah, read in the prophecy the words following the expression "Ye say", in 1:2, 7, 13; 2:14, 17; 3:7, 8, 13, 14. Go now over those expressions in order, for the connection in each case. Give a moment to 2:10 and the connection. Does the context justify the popular interpretation? If the universal fatherhood is here referred to would the prophet's reasoning have force? Is he not protesting against alliances with other nations?

- **PERSONAL THOUGHT:** "For I the Lord change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed." Some one has strikingly said: "God is patient because He is eternal." Am I wholly free from the trifling which to the reprover answers, "Wherein?" Of what spiritual state is such a question indicative?

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STUDY 30: LEADERS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

6th Day: § 169. SOME PSALMS OF THE RESTORATION PERIOD

"I saw a beautiful vase and asked its story. Once it was a lump of common clay. Then it was crushed and ground in the mill, then put upon the wheel and shaped, then polished and tinted, then put in the furnace and burned."—*Selected*.

Of the thirty characters selected yesterday as on the whole most profitable for study, take the first fifteen, and proceed as follows: (1) Go over the list naming aloud the Sub-Period in which each is found (refer if necessary to Diagram III); (2) Go over the list a second time naming aloud any persons of whom you can easily think, who were associated with each character; (3) Go over the list a third time writing down by each name not more than five most prominent traits of character. Select from the list of traits given below, or introduce others as you think best; (4) Go over the list the fourth time selecting for each what you consider to be the most notable characteristic. Would faithfulness be the word to set opposite Abraham's name? What better than persistence could you set over against Jacob?

Some Commendable Traits of Character: Courage, Disinterestedness, Purity, Single-heartedness, Persistence, Faithfulness, Candor, Calmness, Cheerfulness, Contentment, Caution, Promptness, Conscientiousness, Decision, Diligence, Endurance, Earnestness, Fearlessness, Firmness, Generosity, Hopefulness, Kindness, Loyalty, Love, Meekness, Perseverance, Patience, Prudence, Prayerfulness, Reverence, Sincerity, Resiliency, Steadfastness, Sympathy, Self-control, Self-reliance, Thoroughness, Truthfulness, Zeal, Uncompromising Adherence to Conviction. Note how prominent this last has been in successful characters.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Read vv. 65-80 of Psalm 119, proceeding as suggested in Personal Thought of the 3d Day, this Study. Memorize v. 74. How will my hoping in God's Word be the occasion of gladness in those that fear Him?

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STUDY 30: LEADERS OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

7th Day: § 169. SOME PSALMS OF THE RESTORATION PERIOD

"To find the truth and the will of God as expressed in it, to stay by it, love it, make it one's own, defend it to the death,—that is the common goal of religion and of all true science. If one man study the Bible religiously and another study it scientifically, still they are friends and allies unless the one's religion or the other's science is somehow at fault. Indeed, why should your religion exclude my science even here, or my science your religion, if both the science and the religion possess the teachableness and the sweet humility of the little child to which was made the promise of the Kingdom?"—*Bissell*.

Proceed with the second fifteen selected characters as directed in the 6th Day of this Study to do with the first fifteen. Read Isaiah 42:1-9 for a portrayal of ideal character. In vv. 2-4 we have the "Servant" described as: (1) Meek and quiet; (2) Tender and patient; (3) Persevering and hopeful. Look out the expressions on which this analysis is based. Read quotation at head of Study 30, 1st Day. Read Isa. 50:4-9, attempting as you do so to note the prominent features of the character described. Is there any similarity between this description and the one in Isa. 42:1-9? The "Servant" passages culminate in 52:13-53:12, which you should read.

PERSONAL THOUGHT: Do with vv. 97-112 of Psalm 119 as directed in Personal Thought of 3d Day in the present Study. Memorize v. 97. Live v. 112 from henceforth.